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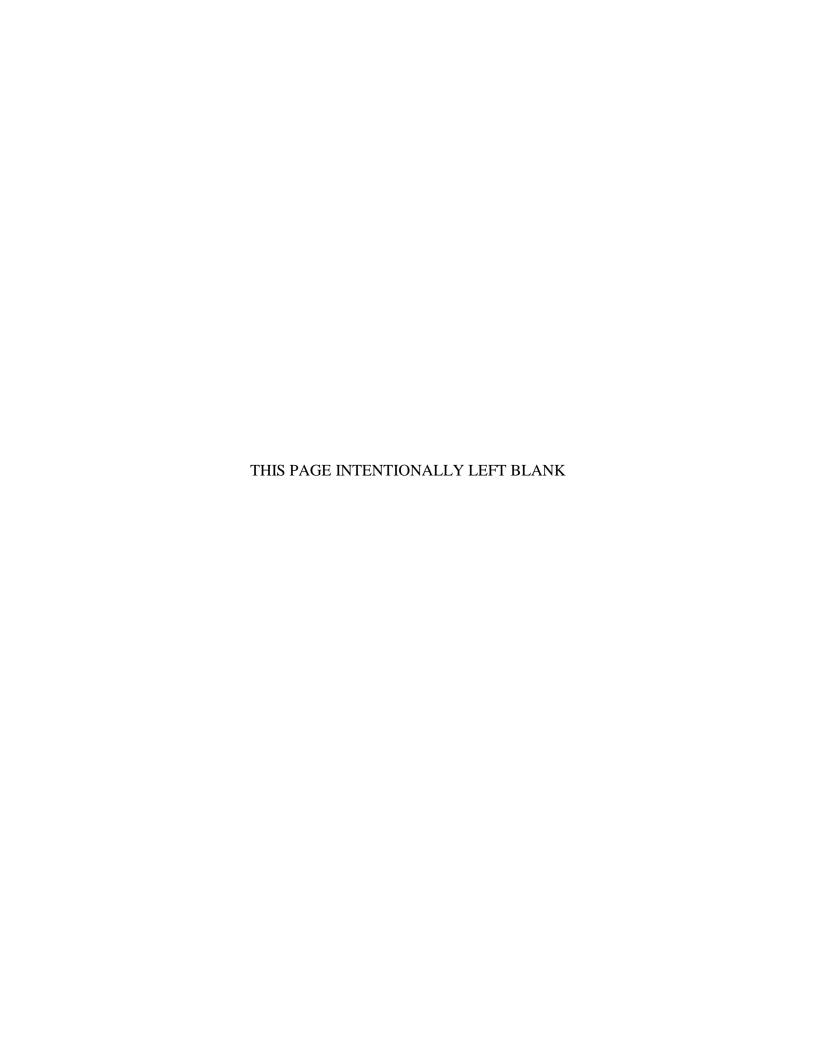CALMING THE CHURN: RESOLVING THE DILEMMA OF ROTATIONAL WARFARE IN COUNTERINSURGENCY

by

Andrew P. Aswell

December 2013

Thesis Advisor: Anna Simons
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CALMING THE CHURN: RESOLVING THE DILEMMA OF ROTATIONAL WARFARE IN COUNTERINSURGENCY

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The U.S. military currently utilizes a unit-rotational model to provide forces to geographic combatant commanders waging ground wars. This model has its roots in policy and historical perception, not strategy and tactics. When applied to counterinsurgency, weaknesses that undermine long-term effectiveness become apparent. Through an examination of the basis of the current model, its performance in the recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and current and historical case studies, this thesis explores alternatives to the rotational model. This thesis finds that a hybrid model that combines the advantages of the current system with historical and current examples from other nations could increase the effectiveness of units in long-term counterinsurgency campaigns.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ARFORGEN   Army Force Generation

ACR   Armored Cavalry Regiment

COIN   counterinsurgency

FM   field manual

MND-SE   Multi-National Division-South East

NCO   non-commissioned officer

NITAT   Northern Ireland Training and Advisory Team

SAS   Special Air Service

SOF   Special Operations Forces

SFG (A)   Special Forces Group (Airborne)

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I.   INTRODUCTION

Iraq, 2007. A glance at the map. Dead Girl Road. It is dangerous. Avoid it. Why is it called that? No one knows. "And this far into the war, no one seemed to care."[1]

This anecdote, drawn from David Finkel's *The Good Soldiers,* illustrates a larger problem with the current U.S. method of "rotational warfare" in counterinsurgency.[2] Perceptions and goals are constrained by deployment and redeployment dates. Careers are made or broken in a single deployment. Villages, politicians, local forces, and knowledge are vitally important for a period of six months to a year, never to be thought of again. These are curious phenomena in conflicts with the potential to span decades.

The way America currently fights its wars—utilizing an all-volunteer force in a sustained unit rotational manner—is radically different from times past. This method ostensibly draws lessons from previous conflicts to maximize effectiveness and win wars better and more quickly. An enormous body of literature exists that studies how the U.S. has fought wars and the effectiveness of the means utilized, but examination of the most recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan in their totality is just now beginning to occur. While the lessons of the past have undoubtedly informed the current method of employment of the American military, the effectiveness of the current practice of employing all-volunteer units on a rotational basis over extended periods of time is worthy of particular examination. The lessons drawn from such an examination are key to developing force management and implementation strategies in future conflicts.

One lesson that has been identified and is crucial to future planning is the lack of attention paid to continuity in U.S. counterinsurgency. Continuity is a vital component in developing and implementing successful counterinsurgency campaigns. As the U.S. rotational warfare model has shown in recent years, inattention to continuity has detrimental effects on counterinsurgency efforts, and a better method can and should be

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[1] David Finkel, *The Good Soldiers* (New York: Picador, 2009), 31.

[2] William S. Sobat, "Relief in Place: Managing Transition of Authority," *Special Warfare* 22, no. 1 (2009): 29.

implemented. To identify such a method, this thesis first examines counterinsurgency theory and past U.S. practices. Shortcomings stemming from the use of units interchangeably point to flaws in the assumptions that underpin the rotational warfare model. Using historic and contemporary case studies drawn from the British and Indian Armies, lessons can be learned about ways to redress the lack of continuity. This thesis will explore some of these lessons and propose measures that address some of the failings of the rotational model to allow the U.S. to more effectively conduct counterinsurgency campaigns in the future.

II.   CONTINUITY IN COUNTERINSURGENCY THEORY

Theories related to counterinsurgency are distinct from theories about conventional war and, like theories in all disciplines, have changed over time. Lessons from different conflicts have been incorporated and dispersed throughout the body of knowledge and even, from time to time, changed some of the precepts that are generally accepted. The most acknowledged and best-advocated theories, however, maintain the same basic tenets. For instance: an insurgency gains its power and sustenance from the population; to effectively defeat the insurgency, it must be separated from this base and destroyed or reconciled; wresting a controlling share of the population from the insurgency by addressing the underlying grievances fueling the insurgency is a primary way to prevent resurgence.[3] Theories differ as to the methods and tactics that the insurgent and counterinsurgent should and have employed to effectively achieve these goals, but this framework is generally accepted.

Modern U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine is predicated on experiences from past conflicts and relies on the work of many theorists and practitioners, but draws a large part of its heritage from the more classic work of David Galula, Frank Kitson, Roger Trinquier, and Sir Robert Thompson albeit through the modernizing lens of David Kilcullen, John Nagl, and others.[4] One constant that persists in the classic theories is the importance of continuity. Counterinsurgency is painstaking work with gains measured by inches not miles, and solutions are oft-characterized as "long-term."[5] Possessing a detailed understanding of the local area, the population, and the enemy are considered paramount, but gaining this nuanced knowledge takes time and cannot easily be communicated or repackaged for dissemination.[6] The chief method of obtaining this

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[3] Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency* (New York: Praeger, 1966), 111–120.

[4] Conrad Crane, "United States," in *Understanding Counterinsurgency: Doctrine, Operations, and Challenges*, ed. Thomas Rid and Thomas Keaney (London: Routledge, 2010), 61, 67.

[5] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3–24: Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2006), 1–24.

[6] John Nagl, preface to *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, by David Galula (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), Kindle edition, 37–46.

knowledge of the populace, terrain, and enemy is through long-term, sustained relationships between ground forces and the populace.[7] Key to developing reciprocal relations with members of the populace as part of this learning process, trust must be developed between counterinsurgent forces and locals; trust is also critical for long-term solutions to take root and gain support.[8] Time and contact are the two necessary ingredients for fostering this trust.

An important truism about human nature—namely, that trust is not communicable from one individual (counterinsurgent) to the next—is not accounted for in current doctrine.[9] David Galula, a veteran of the French experience in Algeria, contends that, to effectively maintain control of the populace, counterinsurgents should be dispersed among the population in an assigned area and "always work there."[10] While this statement is not meant to be taken literally, the concept communicated is two-fold. First, the counterinsurgent can only truly gain the required knowledge through close, constant, long-term contact with the populace. Second, that an impression must be given to the populace that the counterinsurgent, like the insurgent, is not a transient, but is instead vested in the long-term interests of the local area and populace.[11]

General Sir Frank Kitson, a former commander of the Land Forces of the United Kingdom and prominent counterinsurgency theorist, is very specific on the importance of continuity in a counterinsurgency environment.

> The first of these problems concerns continuity because the whole core of the business undoubtedly lies in the deduction process which by its very nature takes time and which can only be carried out by the tactical commander. If tactical commanders are changed too frequently no long-term development of information will be attempted and officers will for ever [sic] be aiming for quick results in terms of numbers of insurgents killed as opposed to enemy organizations rooted out and destroyed.

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[7] Nagl, preface to *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 37–46.

[8] David Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), Kindle edition, 37.

[9] Jack Barbalet, "A Characterization of Trust, and Its Consequences," *Theory and Society* 38, no. 4 (2009): 378.

[10] David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), Kindle edition, 1222–1223.

[11] Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 1186–1189.

Furthermore the tactical commander will always be at a disadvantage compared with his opponent who may have been operating in the District for months or even years before he arrived.[12]

Likewise, Sir Robert Thompson, a respected British counterinsurgency theorist with extensive experience in both Malaya and Vietnam, addressed continuity in the U.S. advisory effort in the initial stages of counterinsurgency in Vietnam.

[W]eakness in Vietnam . . . stemmed partly from the fact that American military personnel did such short tours. If unaccompanied by their families, tours were limited to one year. However high the calibre, and it was uniformly good, no great achievements in counter-insurgency are possible in such a short period. All that the individual can hope to do is to leave his post at the end of the year as he would like to find it. He cannot do more than prepare the ground for his successors.[13]

For these classical theorists, continuity is a precious commodity that is necessary in order to provide the counterinsurgent force sufficient knowledge to understand the local situation, adapt, and prosecute effective measures by, with, and through the population and against the insurgency. In other words, persistent contact is needed between the same forces and the population in the same area over time.

More recent theories, like those advanced by David Kilcullen and Steven Metz, have taken what are understood to be modern realities into account. The concepts of continuity and institutional memory, developed in units over time in order to craft tailored solutions for specific areas, have been supplanted by "adaptability," organizational learning, and a deliberate turnover process to the next unit aided by technology.[14] Very rarely is consideration given to the possibility that a departing unit will return to the same area. There is a common belief that a comprehensive handover, if it is well-planned from the beginning of a unit's tour, will make professional, adaptable organizations effective enough to succeed in counterinsurgency. Technology and this

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[12] Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1971), 131.

[13] Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency,* 165.

[14] Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, 2, 36, Steven Metz and Raymond Millen, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the 21st Century: Reconceptualizing Threat and Response," *Special Series: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the 21st Century* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), 25, and Stephen Metz, *Learning From Iraq: Counterinsurgency in American Strategy* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2007), 40.

turnover period are acceptable substitutes for continuity, or so current thinking suggests. This concept is reflected in both modern theories and current U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine.[15] Indeed, continuity is mentioned only in passing in current U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine under the general concept of "transitions" of "stream[s] of activity," and with regard to intelligence analysis. Continuity of forces *is* covered, but it is buried in a paragraph on an eye chart-sized table. Even the unit handover is relegated to only brief mentions in appendices.[16]

According to these same modern theories and doctrine, meanwhile, organizations are still expected to master knowledge of the culture, people, terrain, and enemy, as well as develop relationships and gain trust with indigenous peoples, local governments, and host-nation security forces in order to generate creative locally-based solutions to counterinsurgency challenges.[17] The deficit of time afforded to these tasks is ostensibly erased by technology. But—are technology and adaptability sufficient to bridge this gap?

A shift in perception of what a counterinsurgent *is* has occurred. Tellingly, terms previously used to describe counterinsurgents like "sector," "static," and "stationary" forces (meant to connote the ability of forces to remain in an area long enough to gain detailed knowledge, not to imply lack of initiative) have given way to the concept of dynamic adaptable forces.[18] Consequently, according to more modern interpretations, the environment is ever-evolving and, while an effort must be made to understand the environment to develop the right solutions, the rapid pace of change and complexity mean full knowledge can never be attained.[19] There is a dichotomy between what classic theories suggest and what exists today, which is ostensibly built on those same theories.

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[15] Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, 36 and *Field Manual 3–24*, A-8, C-4.

[16] *Field Manual 3–24*, 2–10, 2–25, 3–33, A-8. While not finalized, an initial 2013 draft of the revised *Field Manual 3-24 Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies* continues with the theme of the effective transition as adequate substitute for continuity and the unit rotational concept is alluded to as an assumed fact (pp. 7-7-8, 8-17, 9-3).

[17] Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, 3, 30, 37 and *Field Manual 3–24*, 1–25–27, C-4.

[18] Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1985), 73, Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 1146, Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations*, 92, and Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, 2.

[19] Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency,* 3.

It seems critical to examine how this disjuncture has developed. By examining the degree to which continuity was taken seriously in past U.S. counterinsurgency endeavors, we should be able to identify when and why the shift in its significance occurred.

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III. CONTINUITY IN THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

The United States has engaged in counterinsurgency since its inception. Throughout the eighteen and ninteenth centuries, the U.S. waged campaigns against various Native American tribes in North America. Since the turn of the twentieth century, the U.S. has repeatedly engaged in counterinsurgency on foreign soil in the Philippines, the Caribbean and Latin America, Vietnam, the Cold War, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Whether the military can be said to have accomplished continuity during these counterinsurgencies is itself inconsistent. At times, continuity was inadvertently achieved; at others, it was given no heed. Some prominent individuals in the military establishment during the twentieth century lent credence to the concept of continuity, but, often, institutional and higher level operational considerations outweighed any emphasis on continuity as a matter of course.

A. CONTINUITY IN THE WARS OF THE PAST

1. Philippines 1899–1902

During the Philippine War, U.S. volunteer and regular units were specifically raised, trained, and deployed to fight nationalist forces after gaining the territory as a result of the U.S. defeat of the Spanish during the Spanish-American War. The conventional fight was short. After their defeat, Ronaldo Aguinaldo's pro-independence formations subsequently reverted to the guerrilla warfare strategy previously employed during Spanish rule. The U.S. commander, Major General Elwell Otis, imagining the war over and the guerrilla threat merely a nuisance, divided the country into provinces, districts, and zones. Each received assigned forces and garrisons to help administer military government and provide security. In essence, they were to act as an occupation force with the needs of the Filipinos in mind. Incidentally, the combination of isolation and the slow pace of communications resulted in each unit developing both counter-

guerrilla and civil military operations tailored to its local area with knowledge gained over time. Often, this proved extremely successful for countering the still-simmering insurgency.[20]

Recognizing the effectiveness of these tactics, Major General Arthur MacArthur, first a subordinate commander under Otis and later commander of U.S. forces in the Philippines, developed a strategy that incorporated such local solutions within the overall campaign plan to counter the insurgency. Howard Taft, head of the commission that oversaw the transfer of power from U.S. military to U.S. civilian control, told President McKinley that these efforts by local commanders would dictate the success of the war in the Philippines. This reliance on continuity and its benefit to counterinsurgency operations, however, would not last and, after only a year, MacArthur was sent to other duties thanks to personality conflicts with Taft. His replacement, Major General Adna Chaffee, had no taste for the population-centric strategy previously developed, and thus did away with geographically oriented small garrisons in favor of large, flexible units and built-up camps.[21] The response to further guerrilla attacks was massive, brutal, and, ultimately, successful but left a stained public legacy, whose character is much debated by historians.[22]

Essentially, after an initial nod to continuity, a strategy was adopted that did not require it, but still met the goals of national policy. Yet, despite the defeat of the independence-oriented insurgents, Muslim Moros on the Philippine island of Mindanao continued to resist. Captain John J. Pershing, already in the Philippines for two years, was placed in charge of the effort to subdue the Moros, and, through a two-year campaign during which he alternately wooed tribes and defeated those intent on battle, he proved successful. Pershing's immense effort to acquire intimate knowledge of the Moros in order to engage them on their terms gained him great respect throughout the Moro population.

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[20] Brian McAllister Linn, *The U.S. Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippine War, 1899–1902* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 12, 17, 21–22.

[21] Linn, *The U.S. Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippine War*, 21–27.

[22] Linn, *The U.S. Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippine War*, 27 and Brian McAllister Linn, *The Philippine War 1899–1902* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2000), 322–23.

Interestingly, this seeming commitment to continuity—giving a Philippines-experienced officer a mission that others with less local knowledge had been unable to accomplish—was, in fact, a product of Pershing's own design. In 1901, Captain Pershing's tour was over, and he only remained in theater by transferring to a unit already on its way to the Philippines. This and his subsequent performance helped Pershing gain the attention of his superiors.[23] By sending Pershing back to the Philippines twice more, once as commander of Fort McKinley in 1908 and later as the governor of Moro Province for three years, where he succeeded in finally disarming the Moros, the Army demonstrated an awareness of the value of local knowledge and continuity.[24]

Directly contravening this, however, were policies that frequently rotated units and other individuals out of Moro Province. In fact, despite officers being carefully selected for specific traits and qualities to serve in long-term governance positions, legislation passed in the U.S. Congress required officers to spend four out of every six years with a line regiment. The average tour for one of these officers in the Philippines was 14 months. Over time, counterproductive actions like these convinced now-General Pershing that the Army was an "inappropriate tool for long-term pacification work."[25] How ironic but revealing that the lack of continuity in U.S. operations convinced a prime beneficiary of the positive aspects of continuity that the Army was incapable of effectively executing tasks such as counterinsurgency.

2.   Caribbean and Latin America 1898–1934

The U.S. Marine Corps spent much of the early twentieth century engaged in a series of small wars in the Caribbean and Latin America. The Marines quelled civil wars, put down rebellions, built host-nation security forces, supervised elections, and conducted civil development with varying levels of success. Brigades spent years and

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[23] Donald Smythe, *Guerrilla Warrior: The Early Life of John J. Pershing* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 61–2, 66–110.

[24] Smythe, *Guerrilla Warrior*, 133, 144–174.

[25] Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine 1860–1941* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center for Military History, 1998), 162–3.

decades in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua, among other locations.[26] Personnel could serve for years in these units gaining local knowledge and expertise. But, frequent changes of command along with lapses in strategic direction, the outbreak of World War I and other global commitments, and fluctuating resources often served to undermine continuity.[27] The 1940 USMC *Small Wars Manual* that grew out of the Marine experiences over the previous half-century cited local knowledge, trust of the populace, and detailed intelligence as critical factors, but it did not specifically discuss continuity over time.[28]

3.   World War II

During World War II, Army Captain Russell Volckmann fought against the Japanese as the commander of resistance forces in Northern Luzon in the Philippines.[29] Later, drawing on his experience as a guerrilla leader, then-Colonel Volckmann wrote the U.S. Army's earliest manual for counterinsurgency. First published in 1950 as *Special Text 31-20-1 Operations Against Guerrilla Forces* by the Army's Infantry Center to meet the emerging needs of the Korean War, it was soon released as *Field Manual 31-20*. This doctrinal manual espoused the value of continuity of command, policy, and forces. This emerged from Volckmann's first hand experiences as a guerrilla. In his dealings with the Japanese, Volckmann observed that the disruption and loss of continuity created when Japanese units rotated frequently worked to the advantage of his own guerrilla forces. Although Japanese units working in Luzon became knowledgeable and gained sufficient local expertise to adapt their tactics and nearly destroy the guerrillas, an abrupt rotation of forces caused a loss of this knowledge and allowed Volckmann's resistance forces to regroup and reconstitute themselves successfully enough that the new Japanese units

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[26] Ivan Musicant, *The Banana Wars* (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 178–9, 202, 207, 244, 272, 274, 302–3, 307, 347 and Lester D. Langley, *The Banana Wars: American Intervention in the Caribbean 1898–1934* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 130, 154, 159, 212.

[27] Musicant, *The Banana Wars,* 205, 210–11, 214, 230, 273, 279.

[28] Department of the Navy, *U.S. Marine Corps Small Wars Manual* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1940), 1–10 18–19, 1–15 26, 1–30 42–3, 2–3 5.

[29] Mike Guardia, *American Guerrilla: The Forgotten Heroics of Russell W. Volckmann* (Philadelphia: Casemate, 2010), 101.

were incapable of defeating them.[30] Continuity, in Volckmann's view and experience, was an "essential" part of any counterinsurgency effort, and abandonment of this principle would only aid the insurgent.[31]

4.   Vietnam

Unfortunately, the lack of use of this doctrine for the rest of the decade and repeated manual revisions, subsumptions, and supersessions diluted some of Volckmann's principles, and, by 1961, *Field Manual 31–15 Operations Against Irregular Forces* stated that continuity to develop in-depth local knowledge was merely "desirable."[32] By 1963's *Field Manual 31-23 U.S Army Counterinsurgent Forces*, the stated principle of continuity in counterinsurgency disappeared completely, replaced instead with a new concept that centered on rapidly deployable regionally-oriented Special Forces Groups.[33] These units grew from an initial design intended to stay behind to train and fight alongside guerrillas in the event of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe. As the concept was expanded, it was assumed that these forces' regional familiarity in different parts of the world would function as an acceptable substitute in counterinsurgency for knowledge gained in specific areas over time. Within this new concept, units were not expected to spend long periods in one place and were instructed to pass on incomplete tasks to replacements.[34] Given the context this was not necessarily an unreasonable concept. But the rapid rise of troop levels in Vietnam quickly outstripped the ability of the nascent Special Forces community to supply enough knowledgeable individuals.

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[30] Guardia, *American Guerrilla*, 160–63, Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine 1942–1976* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center for Military History, 2006), 130–34 and Department of the Army, *Special Text 31–20–1 Operations Against Guerrilla Forces* (Fort Benning, GA: The Infantry School, 1950), 35, 42–43.

[31] *Special Text 31–20–1*, 42.

[32] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 31-15 Operations Against Irregular Forces* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1961), 12.

[33] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 31-22 U.S. Army Counterinsurgency Forces* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, 1963), 15–16.

[34] *Field Manual 31-22*, 110.

As in the Philippines at the turn of the century and during the Banana Wars after that, units were deployed to Vietnam and often remained there. In a general and conceptual way, this could even be said to fit with the emphasis on continuity advanced by Pershing and Volckmann. The break with theory, however, came with the way forces were managed and the lessons the U.S. learned as a consequence of Vietnam.

To sustain units in Vietnam, the U.S. instituted an individual rotation policy of one-year tours. The entire complement of each unit would completely turn over every year. This led to poor unit cohesion and discipline problems as the constant, rapid flow of individuals prevented stability within the unit.[35] Leaders learned from this and, in the 1980s, instituted a unit rotation policy with the new all-volunteer force. Over the next 20 years, deployments to Lebanon, the Sinai, and Bosnia adhered to this policy seemingly without adverse effects to missions.[36] For all practical purposes, Volckmann's continuity of forces concept was abandoned and discussions of continuity in more contemporary writings by Galula, Thompson, and Kitson were ignored.

However, one lesson from Vietnam that was not transmitted, but that was noted in a RAND study, relates to institutional memory:

> Another organizational phenomenon with seriously adverse impact on U.S. ability to learn and adapt in Vietnam is the shocking lack of institutional memory. "We have devised a unique sort of bureaucratic machine which . . . tends to ensure that our operation in Vietnam will always be vigorous, will never grow tired, but will also never grow wiser." Or, to cite John Vann, "[w]e don't have twelve years' experience in Vietnam. We have one year's experience twelve times over."[37]

5.   The Recent Past

Yet, given the nature of the missions over the course of deployments in the 1980s and 1990s—short, hot wars in Grenada, Panama, and the Persian Gulf as well as

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[35] Mark DePue, "Counting the Days," *Vietnam* 19 (2006): 36 and Lewis Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999), 287-9.

[36] General John Keane, Acting Chief of Staff of the Army, Wednesday Department of Defense News Briefing, July 23, 2003, http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2869.

[37] Robert W. Komer, *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: Institutional Constraints on U.S.-GVN Performance in Vietnam* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp., 1972), 67.

peacekeeping and humanitarian relief missions in Haiti, Africa, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East—the importance of this lesson was not viewed as critical. Only when the U.S. found itself embroiled in Iraq and Afghanistan did it became evident that longer-term commitments involving sustained conflict might be required. Already in 2002, the U.S. government and leaders were revisiting the individual rotation policy used in Vietnam, but the consensus was that "the rotation mistake in Vietnam was individual rotation."[38] They believed that unit rotation better increased combat effectiveness.[39] Meanwhile, no mention was made of the time, trust, or knowledge required for the long-term solutions doctrinally advocated. In fact, recommendations made by the Congressional Budget Office about both unit rotations and their duration were dictated by the total forces available, the need to stabilize soldiers and families, and the desire to strive toward the six-to-twelve month deployment norm that had been established.[40] The subsequent development of the Army's Force Generation Model (ARFORGEN), which had as a primary priority enabling the Army to "[p]revail in protracted counterinsurgency campaigns," dictated an Army "operating on a rotational cycle to provide a sustained flow of trained and ready forces for full spectrum operations . . . predictable and sustainable for an all-volunteer force."[41] What is seen here is that the U.S. divergence from the classic contention that the counterinsurgent should work in an assigned area for as long as possible to gain familiarity has been firmly institutionalized.

B.   EFFECTS OF THE ABSENCE OF CONTINUITY[42]

Despite the fact that there is now a gap between what the classic theories outline and what is practiced (and even written as doctrine), it is generally acknowledged by

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[38] Thomas E. Ricks, "U.S. to Rotate Troops in Afghanistan: Moving Units Rather Than Individuals Reflects Lesson From Vietnam War," *The Washington Post*, May 16, 2002, A-16.

[39] Ricks, "U.S. to Rotate Troops in Afghanistan," A-16.

[40] Congressional Budget Office, *An Analysis of the U.S. Military's Ability to Sustain the Occupation of Iraq* (Washington, DC: Congressional Budget Office, 2003), 10, 31–33.

[41] Department of the Army, *Regulation 525–29: Army Force Generation* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2011), 1.

[42] Some supporting evidence in this section and the following chapter is drawn from extensive informal discussions with experienced active duty officers and NCOs as well as from my own experiences in Infantry and Special Forces units over five tours in Iraq between 2003 and 2010.

leaders and the relevant literature that, once the counterinsurgent arrives on the ground and receives a hand-off from his predecessor, there is a steep "learning curve" regarding knowledge, tactics, and personalities.[43] Nonetheless, the means to mitigate this is the well-planned and executed unit handover, known as a relief in place. Unfortunately, time, trust, and institutional memory, along with other factors, are glossed over and unaccounted for by this method.

The churn in the counterinsurgency environment produced by rotational warfare is not only lamented by counterinsurgency theorists and others, but is readily acknowledged by senior commanders. General David Petraeus, then the commander of U.S. Central Command, testified before the House Armed Services Committee in 2010. Representative Mac Thornberry (R-Texas) posed a question as to why the U.S. was not able to adapt and learn from mistakes identifying and fighting insurgents over the years spent in Afghanistan. General Petraeus responded that "to a degree . . . we fought Afghanistan for seven years in one year increments."[44] Notably, he did not make this statement in the context of seeking any basic change in how the U.S. fights long wars, but instead intended to support for his point that counterinsurgency is a "local war" that requires "granular understanding" of all aspects of the environment.[45] His aim in this forum, speaking to the holders of the purse strings, was to elicit more resources in order to better build that understanding.

General Petraeus's comments are worth illustrating because they do not just illustrate, but *highlight* the disconnect between counterinsurgency theory and its actual practice. General Petraeus' comments echo those of John Paul Vann in his condemnation of the individual replacement system during Vietnam. But while General Petraeus focused on one reality of the battlefield and one lesson learned, he did not make Vann's leap in tracing the problem to its source: the method we utilize to rotate forces in and out

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[43] Ann Scott Tyson, "Major Iraq Troop Rotation Gets Under Way: In the Largest Turnover Since World War II, Iraq-bound Soldiers Face a Steep Learning Curve," *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 3, 2004, 1.

[44] House Committee on Armed Services, *Developments in Afghanistan: Hearing before the House Committee on Armed Services*, 111th Congress, 2nd sess., June 16, 2010.

[45] House Committee on Armed Services, *Developments in Afghanistan*.

of combat. This has effects at the tactical level, to be sure. But it also extends to the operational and strategic efforts of establishing or reforming governance and addressing the population's grievances that generate support for the insurgency in the first place.

Take, for example, a popular technique employed as a long-term effort in this vein. The counterinsurgent undertakes a widespread school-building program. This program offers a number of benefits. In the short-term, it shows members of the local population that the counterinsurgent force cares about their future, and not just about defeating the insurgents. It provides activities for young people and employment for adults who could otherwise be influenced by the insurgency. As the school-building program progresses, additional projects are undertaken in the name of or in partnership with the government, adding legitimacy and building goodwill toward it. Over time, the education level of the population is raised, increasing the likelihood that locals will participate in the governing process rather than being suborned by those who wish to violently induce change from outside that process.

Admittedly, all of these benefits are theoretical, hard to quantify, and there is heated debate as to whether school-building or similar techniques work at all. However, any such discussions mask the fundamental issue that *should* be debated: if, after years, multiple force rotations, and the inevitable loss of information due to unit, personnel, and equipment transfers, not a single counterinsurgent knows the purpose for which the school was built, how can its effectiveness be judged? Unfortunately, this is the situation that results all too often from many of the endeavors undertaken. Theory is put into practice, but the examination of its effects are lost in the churn of the rotational war and the constant effort to do something, anything about a problem that does not seem to be going away.

In a related effect that exploits the breakdowns in oversight during frequent personnel rotations, numerous examples of corruption in the disbursement of funds and awarding of contracts by U.S. military personnel to locals in Iraq and Afghanistan abound. While multiple prosecutions and convictions of some of the perpetrators have occurred, undoubtedly the number of actual crimes is greater. The same problems that allow a school to languish unnoticed a short time after being built account for these other

failures. At the same time, while instances of corruption in the counterinsurgent force undermine the usefulness of "money as a weapons system" to help address the population's underlying grievances, a larger problem is that this also undermines the counterinsurgent's narrative.[46] The loss of credibility is two-fold. Domestic support of the government and popular opinion at home are critical to any war-fighting effort; breaches of trust directly erode this support. In the same manner, an erosion of trust between the local populace and government casts a pall over all other efforts the counterinsurgent undertakes.

Essentially, churn promoted by the constant rotation of units creates a cascade of problems. Well-intentioned programs are lost in the shuffle and local opportunists try to capitalize on the fact that headquarters turn over to steal money. One might argue that issues such as these could be resolved with better supervision, better training, and better technology and knowledge management during the relief in place process. If better technical systems were built, the opportunities for failure would be reduced. Technology could allow a unit to begin mitigating these failures before it even deploys. The problem with such technological fixes, however, is that they treat symptoms, not the structural flaws in the model of rotational war.

To illustrate this, consider another lesson from Vietnam. In addition to the individual rotation policy, leaders were rotated through command positions frequently, as often as every six months.[47] The crucible of combat experience had to be spread around to increase the overall effectiveness of the force and officers needed command experience in combat to get promoted. This led to inexperienced commanders commanding and a loss of unit cohesion.[48] This problem was acknowledged after Vietnam. The lesson that officer corps careerism and ticket-punching had led to decreased operational effectiveness and increased casualties was learned and the problem remedied. Two-year

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[46] Department of the Army, *Handbook 09–27: Commander's Guide to Money as a Weapons System* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Center for Army Lessons Learned, 2009), 1.

[47] DePue, "Counting the Days," 36.

[48] DePue, "Counting the Days," 36.

command tours became the standard.[49] The aim was no longer to spread experience around. If a deployment rotation happened during a commander's tour, fine. If his command tour ended during a rotation, no problem, he would change command. Yet the unforeseen consequence of this in Iraq and Afghanistan was that even one change in commanders could be problematic. To change a commander during an operational deployment was seen to degrade operational effectiveness.[50] The two-year rule was thus relaxed with the advent of unit-focused stabilization and the ARFORGEN cycle. Commanders would finish the deployment with the units they had trained and fought with, even if their time in command exceeded the two-year policy.[51] Careerism was held at bay. But, while these reforms were certainly well-intentioned, they ignored the fundamental effect of rotating units on the institutional career model.

Currently, a command tour under the unit rotational model usually translates to one combat deployment during a commander's tenure. Promotion boards and command boards understandably promote and give the responsibility of further command to combat-proven, effective leaders. Combat experience during command is valued more than is service in a staff or support role. This means a commander has one shot to prove himself. That shot will effectively determine whether his promotion to higher rank and selection for further command are secure. In other words, a commander's fate is inextricably tied to the perception of his performance and that of his unit during their tour in combat. This reality, in turn, incentivizes two behaviors that run counter to any efforts to maintain systemic continuity amid unit rotations. These behaviors are influenced by what has been described as the visibility theory of promotion: the more an individual is in a position to be seen, the greater his chances of advancement.[52] Consequently, to increase the appearance of effectiveness and to excel, a commander cannot do the exact same

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[49] Department of the Army, *Army Regulation 600-20 Army Command Policy* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2002), 8.

[50] Department of the Army, *Army Regulation 600-35 Army Force Stabilization System* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2007), 3, 11.

[51] Department of the Army, *Army Regulation 600-20 Army Command Policy* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2006), 12 and *Army Regulation 600-35*, 3.

[52] David W. Moore, and B. Thomas Trout. "Military Advancement: The Visibility Theory of Promotion." *The American Political Science Review* 72, no. 2 (1978): 452, 455–56.

things, let alone continue the policies of his predecessors or his peers. He *must* stand out. He must do something different. In short, continuity loses out to the need to appear effective.

Second, when it comes to the perception of being effective, "perception" is the operative word. Take the benefits of the school-building program described earlier. *Is* such a program effective? Can effectiveness even be measured at the end of 15 months, let alone six months? It seems self-evident that the relatively brief period available to those who are evaluating performance hardly grants them sufficient time to understand the effects of whatever techniques a commander employs. If a commander conducts operations that build three local security force units, yield hundreds of confiscated weapons, and destroy two local insurgent networks, are those operations effective over time? Is a single tour-length sufficient to determine this? From Robert Thompson's comments relayed earlier, it is clear he would say "no."

If effectiveness cannot be determined over the length of a tour, but a commander is judged based on that tour, the long-term effects of the techniques he employs must be assumed to be successful or at least portrayed as such in order for him to be judged a success and continue on his career path. Actual continuity in the counterinsurgency effort is thereby sacrificed to perceptions; effectiveness is rendered irrelevant. Under this system, not only is the success of a counterinsurgent technique or effort dictated by perceptions of success at the end of a single tour, but the cycle is then repeated as units rotate out and new headquarters come in and wipe the slate clean.

This problem is compounded by turbulence at all levels of command at different times. If a tactical-level commander is unable to determine effectively the long-term effects of the operations and counterinsurgent techniques he employs, how can an operational or strategic-level commander identify success, let alone reinforce it, allow it to develop, and then adapt those same techniques to other areas of his command? How can unsuccessful techniques be identified and eliminated? If a higher-level commander does not have purview over multiple units responsible for the same tasks in the same areas *over time*, how can he judge the effectiveness of those units and give guidance to those replacing them or even his own replacement? Compounding the problem, again, is

that the rotational system that guarantees discontinuity makes it extremely difficult to discern successful techniques from those that merely *appear* successful.

Any solution designed to improve the utilization of forces to prosecute a counterinsurgency must somehow remedy the challenge of maintaining continuity. The local knowledge and experience gained on the ground are key factors in such a fight. Gaining the trust of the population helps acquire intelligence and secure support against the insurgents. Building the "granular understanding" about the locality creates the ability to distinguish the insurgent from the population. Personal relationships are a necessary component, and those come only with time.

Part of the problem with highlighting and addressing these concerns is a fundamental belief in the military that units and people are interchangeable. It is a basic principle of professional modern militaries that units are held to uniform standards to ensure that capabilities are equal across the force in order to guarantee that planners can effectively apply manpower and forces against requirements. This principle is the foundation for the policies and procedures that govern the management and application of forces. Rotational warfare is possible only in so far as all units are the same. For all intents and purposes, this means that the concept of interchangeability not only masks but trumps any problems resulting from the lack of attention to continuity. Such problems are viewed as the costs of doing business. But, according to Frank Kitson, in counterinsurgency, continuity is at the heart of the business.[53] Thus the underlying assumption of interchangeability is worth a second look.

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[53] Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations*, 131.

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IV. INTERCHANGEABILITY: THE ENEMY OF CONTINUITY

An underlying assumption necessary in the U.S. method of force rotation is that the units asked to conduct missions are interchangeable. Given recent U.S. experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, a relevant question arises: is this assumption of interchangeability valid in a counterinsurgency environment? There are opposing views on this subject, but, by using this rotational method, the U.S. military presumes the validity of this assumption. Critics argue that the specialized nature of counterinsurgency requires specialized forces to instead.[54] Yet, a mean between the two may not only be achievable, but is actually necessary. The argument to be made in this chapter is that with time, training, and experience, interchangeable units can be adapted to execute counterinsurgency operations. If continuity is not maintained, however, that adaptation is wasted, and the process must begin again with a new unit. Specialized knowledge and adaptive techniques are as important as the critics contend, but, so is maintaining continuity and experience.

A. INTERCHANGEABILITY IN THEORY

According to both current U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine and many historical theorists, infantry forces with mobility assets employed in a flexible role are an essential core capability in any counterinsurgency effort.[55] However, at any point during operations in Iraq or Afghanistan, a drive down a main supply route would have revealed the presence of numerous different types of units performing dismounted or motorized ground tasks. A few months earlier or later, a completely different set of units would have occupied that same space.

During conflicts in which the strategy required large numbers of ground troops, there simply were not enough infantry forces to fill the void. The exigencies of war, troop

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[54] Edward N. Luttwak, "Notes on Low-Intensity Warfare," *Parameters* 13, no. 4 (1983): 16 and John Nagl, *Institutionalizing Adaptation: It's Time for a Permanent Army Advisor Corps* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2007), 3.

[55] *Field Manual 3–24,* 2–5, David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), Kindle Edition, 415, and Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*, 76.

strain, and the lack of a widespread need for heavy forces and artillery combined to create an opportunity. Artillery battalions, cavalry squadrons, and armor units were employed in what would traditionally be considered infantry roles and conducted counterinsurgency interchangeably with infantry units. It could be argued that one combat battalion, be it mounted, motorized, armored, mechanized, or airborne, was considered to be as good as another, and all were capable of performing the same role.

The generalist officer model and the concept of individual interchangeability ("everyone is a soldier first") lend theoretical support to the idea that these units could perform equally well. Yet, as American strategists like Edward Luttwak point out, none of these forces, not even the infantry, are adequate in counterinsurgency. Their very nature as attrition-focused, highly standardized units is not applicable to the area-specific methods that are required in counterinsurgencies.[56] In Luttwak's view, interchangeability is the antithesis of counterinsurgency. Luttwak argues that U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) are the most appropriate force given the existing U.S. structure for waging a counterinsurgency.[57] The situations in Iraq and Afghanistan, however, where the lack of local security forces, the absence of governance, and deep rifts within the population necessitated a much larger nation-building effort than SOF could shoulder, did not really permit exclusive use of SOF.[58]

The standardized military occupational specialty (MOS) system for enlisted soldiers creates a system akin to the concept of the assembly line and interchangeable parts.[59] The *Soldier's Manual of Common Tasks* dictates a baseline set of combat skills for all soldiers.[60] The Non-Commissioned Officer Education System then takes these baseline skills and develops them into the professional backbone of the Army. In theory,

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[56] Luttwak, "Notes on Low-Intensity Warfare," 16.

[57] Luttwak, "Notes on Low-Intensity Warfare," 16.

[58] Andrew Feickert, *Does the Army Need a Full-Spectrum Force or Specialized Units? Background and Issues for Congress*, CRS Report RL34333 (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, January 18, 2008): 11.

[59] John Tillson, "It's the Personnel System," in *Spirit, Blood, and Treasure: The Cost of American Battle in the 21st Century*, ed. Donald E. Vandergriff (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 2001), 76.

[60] Department of the Army, *STP 21–1-SMCT Soldier's Manual of Common Tasks: Skill Level 1* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2003), vi.

with these baseline skills instilled in every enlisted soldier, a mechanized infantryman without his vehicle, a tank crewman without his tank, or an artilleryman without his howitzer should be just as useful in a counterinsurgency environment as an infantryman since none of them are specially trained for counterinsurgency.

The generalist model for military officers was laid out in the Officer Personnel Act of 1947 and finalized in the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980 during the Army's post-Vietnam professionalization. Career paths were standardized, the size of the officer corps was regulated, and generalists were ensconced as a permanent normative fixture in the military.[61] When combined with standardized professional military education, the product was senior leaders with general knowledge across the force, not just in their personal career path. This has meant that each officer begins in a specialized branch and, as his training and experience broaden his knowledge base, becomes a generalist over time.[62] An artillery battalion commander should therefore have the same foundational knowledge as an infantry battalion commander for a task that neither of them is specifically trained for, like counterinsurgency. The advent of the modular Brigade Combat Team reinforced this concept. In this structure, officers can learn one specialty early in their career and later be given combat-arms immaterial commands or staff positions in units with a completely different specialty. Infantry or armor officers can command cavalry squadrons in Brigade Combat Teams, for instance.

B.   INTERCHANGEABILITY IN PRACTICE

The combination of these enlisted and officer processes provides the basis for employing different types of units interchangeably. But—how efficacious is this for counterinsurgency? To answer that, we can compare the experiences of two battalion-sized units, one infantry and one cavalry, that faced similar situations in Iraq. Such a

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[61] Bernard Rostker et al., *The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980: A Retrospective Assessment* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp., 1993), 1–2.

[62] Peter Schirmer, Harry J. Thie, Margaret C. Harrell, and Michael S. Tseng, *Challenging Time in DOPMA: Flexible and Contemporary Military Officer Management* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp., 2006), xvi.

comparison partially validates the concept of interchangeability, but also highlights certain inadequacies.

Journalist David Finkel's *The Good Soldiers* recounts the 15-month long deployment of Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Ralph Kauzlarich's 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment (2–16) in the Shiite-dominated Rustamiyah area of Baghdad during 2007–2008. In a white paper written for the Center for a New American Security, LTC Jim Crider outlines his own lessons learned as squadron commander of the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment (1–4) operating in the predominantly Sunni Doura area of Baghdad during the same period. The initial experiences of both units were virtually indistinguishable. They both admitted to a lack of understanding about the enemy they were facing, which generated almost identical questions as to why the people they were trying to help were fighting them.[63] Their units made mistakes, utilized ineffective tactics, and suffered from a lack of intelligence and overall direction. As time progressed, they gained some local knowledge, saw what was working and what was not, and changed their methods, each adopting specific tactics adapted for their areas.[64] In my experience, this was a very common path for units to take during their tours in Iraq, leading to the key question: were they successful? Furthermore, was one more successful than the other?

While these two accounts are far from conclusive, the words of the commanders seem to speak for themselves. LTC Ralph Kauzlarich felt that despite the 2nd Battalion's efforts, there was "still that underlying negativity towards the U.S. that would not allow [2nd Battalion] to reach [its] full potential."[65] LTC Crider, however, saw that "violence in the [1st Squadron's] Doura neighborhood had dropped to levels unimaginable the

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[63] Finkel, *The Good Soldiers*, 85–86 and Jim Crider, *Inside the Surge: One Commander's Lessons in Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2009), 7, http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/CNAS_Working%20Paper_Surge_CriderRicks_June2009_ONLINE.pdf.

[64] Finkel, *The Good Soldiers,* 19–92 and Crider, "Inside the Surge," 7–19.

[65] Ralph Kauzlarich, interview by Darrell Vaughn, June 2, 2011, transcript, Operational Leadership Experiences Project, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS, http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p4013coll13.

previous summer."[66] At least in the eyes of the respective commanders, it seems the cavalry squadron was more successful that the infantry battalion.[67]

Many factors could account for different self-assessments: individual and unit experience, training, the local populace, and the environment among others. On the whole, however, the very different appraisals by these two commanders about their own effectiveness reveal that, while the concept of interchangeability between different types of combat units may not be inherently flawed, it does leave critical issues under-addressed. For instance, under current U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine, a detailed handover from the previous unit would have been essential for the unit to properly understand and adapt to their environment.[68] No mention is made of any effort to ensure continuity by previous units, and the lack of knowledge both commanders said they had about the area indicates that very little knowledge had been transmitted. Even had both 2–16 and 1–4 been given new sectors of responsibility, without taking over from a unit of comparable size, those new sectors would have had to be carved from a previous or existing unit's larger area. Presumably, that previous unit would have had at least some knowledge of the area, and should have had a trove of information to hand over covering the period from 2003 to 2007 regarding past operations, the populace, what methods had been tried in the past, to include, at a minimum, information about the enemy. Unfortunately, that presumption rarely reflects reality.

As an officer who spent months during 2003–2004 in the Doura district of Baghdad, the area assigned to 1–4 four years later, I found it painful to read Crider's account about conducting a census, getting to know local leaders and power brokers, and executing fruitless cordon and search operations. My unit and others had conducted similar efforts, but the lack of continuity between units and headquarters led to a complete absence of institutional knowledge about the area. This illuminates a severe

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[66] Crider, "Inside the Surge," 14.

[67] This speaks to a related issue: the lack of metrics for self-assessment in counterinsurgency. This is partially a factor of time and lack of local knowledge. As Kitson detailed, frequent changes of operational area result in a reliance on metrics that do not necessarily reflect an accurate picture of the situation. To paraphrase Thompson: one year is not enough time in counterinsurgency.

[68] *Field Manual 3–24*, A-1, A-8.

weakness in the practice of transitioning between units in a counterinsurgency. While the generalist officer model and the military's need to treat individuals and units as interchangeable underscore the significance of the *inter-* in *inter*changeability, the current inattention to prior experience and the need to ensure continuity demand a rethinking of what should be meant by the *-change-* in inter*change*ability.

One relevant example illustrates the value to be gained from attention to the significance of continuity. The 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR) was given responsibility for the Ninewah province of Iraq in 2005, including the insurgent-held city of Tal Afar.[69] This 15-month long effort has largely been hailed as a counterinsurgency success and is cited as a model to strive for in the U.S. Army's manual on counterinsurgency.[70] The 3rd ACR did not seem to go through the months-long fits and starts of poor intelligence, tried and failed tactics, and lack of understanding of its environment that characterized the tours of the two battalions in Baghdad. And, of further note, this was an armored cavalry regiment with tanks and fighting vehicles, not a specialized counterinsurgent force with an abundance of dismounted troops. So, what accounts for the difference here?

A number of factors differentiate the 3rd ACR's experience from that of the other two units. First, the 3rd ACR was less than a year out from its previous deployment to Iraq fighting insurgents in adjoining Al Anbar province. This provided it with experience and institutional memory.[71] Second, its new commander, then-Colonel H.R. McMaster had seen the insurgency from the crow's nest of Central Command and had read extensively on counterinsurgency theory, requiring his staff and subordinate leaders to do the same.[72] This contributed experience and training, albeit academic, to the equation. Finally, elements of the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) assisted the planning and

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[69] Bruce R. Pirnie and Edward O'Connell, *Counterinsurgency in Iraq (2003–2006)* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp., 2008), 39.

[70] *Field Manual 3–24*, 5–23.

[71] *Blood and Steel: The History, Customs, and Traditions of the 3rd Cavalry Regiment*, 2013 edition, 3rd Cavalry Regiment Homepage, http://www.hood.army.mil/3d_cr/files/pdfs/BloodAndSteel.pdf.

[72] George Packer, "The Lesson of Tal Afar: Letter from Iraq," *The New Yorker*, April 10, 2006, http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/04/10/060410fa_fact2?currentPage=all.

execution of 3rd ACR's operations with knowledge gained from 5th SFG (A)'s time on the ground in the local area, contributing localized expertise and some continuity from past operations.[73]

Experience, training, local knowledge, and continuity, all things that the 1–4 and 2–16 lacked, enabled the 3rd ACR to develop and employ successful methods in Tal Afar. While this does lend credence to idea that the 3rd ACR could substitute—and hereby was interchangeable—for a formation that is more widely regarded as a better force for conducting counterinsurgency—namely the infantry—it more strongly suggests that specialized knowledge and continuity can help units become more capable in a counterinsurgency environment and that units with these tools will do better than units without them.

Meanwhile, if we dig deeper into LTC Crider's area of responsibility, the Doura sector in the East Rashid District of Baghdad, there are more things to note regarding continuity. Over time, efforts in the area were deemed successful. Once the level of violence dropped, what had once been called a "Sunni insurgent stronghold" underwent a positive transformation and rebirth of its large market area.[74] Efforts made by LTC Crider's squadron, as well as those made by units responsible for other parts of the district during the surge in Iraq, can be viewed as a turning point that allowed later units to build on this initial success. Numerous different types of units over the years were assigned to the Doura area, both before and after 1–4. Light infantry, Stryker armored vehicle, tank, light and heavy cavalry, and combined arms battalion-sized units all conducted operations there during the war.[75] In the aggregate, the long-term improvement in the area would again seem to validate the idea that units with different skill sets can adapt and succeed in counterinsurgency. Looking more closely, however,

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[73] Pirnie and O'Connell, *Counterinsurgency in Iraq*, 39–41.

[74] Joshua Partlow, "I Don't Think This Place Is Worth Another Soldier's Life," *The Washington Post*, October 27, 2007, A1, John A. Nagl and Brian M. Burton, "Striking the Balance: The Way Forward in Iraq," *World Policy Journal* 25, no. 4 (2008/9): 15 and Dave Larsen, "1st Cavalry Passing Baghdad Mission to 4ID," *Army News Service*, December 7, 2007, http://www.army.mil/article/6498/.

[75] Operational Leadership Experiences Project, Interviews with Theron Ballard, Charles Ford, Daniel Rausch, David Siegel, Matt Simons, and Blaine Wales. Transcripts, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS, http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p4013coll13.

some units received no handover or experienced abbreviated transitions.[76] Some units received mission changes after weeks or months in country and arrived and then departed an area quickly.[77]

A unit that moves from one area of responsibility to another numerous times in the first months of its rotation can hardly be expected to gain, maintain, or pass on intimate local knowledge to the units replacing it. In some cases, priorities would change immediately after the unit changeover.[78] New relationships with the local populace and units would be established while others were abandoned.[79] At one point, responsibility was turned over to Iraqi forces, only later to be retracted.[80] Frequent changes like these run counter to any long-term effort toward stability. While the Doura area was eventually viewed as a success, the repeated push and pull of progress resulting from the lack of continuity unnecessarily prolonged the achievement of that success.

C.   THE CHALLENGES OF INCORPORATING CONTINUITY

Admittedly, campaign planning in counterinsurgency is difficult by its very nature. Security conditions, policy, and strategy all progressively develop and change. For planners, anticipation of such changes is problematic. The current solution is to press ahead with interchangeability. If units are interchangeable, this provides flexibility so that strategy can be adapted and forces can be deployed or shifted, based on emerging situations. This reactive method of problem solving, however, is hardly ideal. In the case of the Doura sector, the area progressed then regressed until it became so bad it required significantly more attention before it could improve again. An alternative method would

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[76] Operational Leadership Experiences Project, Charles Ford, interview by Jenna Fike, January 21, 2010.

[77] Operational Leadership Experiences Project, Theron Ballard, interview by Jenn Vedder, November 1, 2010, Matt Simons, interview by Laurence Lessard, June 10, 2009, and Daniel Rausch, interview by Jenna Fike, April 2, 2012.

[78] Operational Leadership Experiences Project, David Siegel, interview by Chris Ives, October 5, 2006.

[79] Operational Leadership Experiences Project, Blaine Wales, interview by Mark Gilmore, January 25, 2008.

[80] John F. Burns, "U.S. Says Violence in Baghdad Rises, Foiling Campaign," *New York Times,* Late Edition, October 20, 2006, A1.

be to instead devise a framework that is proactive and preventative. For any such initiative the key element is continuity.

Cumulative experience and knowledge about past operations undertaken by units in specific areas are essential to being able to plan for and anticipate future conditions. Current doctrine seems to assume only limited knowledge about the past, with planned long-range operations to be limited to three months' worth of effects after a unit's rotation ends.[81] This planning horizon is inadequate, even at the tactical level, for any operation that is expected to contribute to stability over the span of multiple years. For instance, it should not have been unreasonable for LTC Crider to expect to receive four years' worth of information about past operations, the population, the enemy, as well as detailed dossiers on local political and religious leaders, along with a prioritized list of long-term goals for his area. Military leaders with experience might scoff at such a notion, since plans will always change. However, when units come into an area, stay for a few weeks or months, and then shift to other areas of responsibility, the situation eventually comes to resemble the childhood game of telephone. Information is invariably garbled, altered, or lost.

In the digital age, it can be argued that detailed records should be easy to maintain and transmit and should minimize this type of data loss. However, without continuity of effort, changing priorities will dictate what is momentarily important and, thus, what records will be kept. Shifting responsibility for a single area between organizations also means that report formats, frequency of reporting, and content itself can differ significantly, especially if different organizations cover the same geographical area and population. This limits the ease of use as well as the utility of saved records. Not surprisingly, any records turned over to a new unit, which the military refers to as a 'continuity' file, will often be limited to the transitioning unit's own experience. This points to yet another way in which nothing is as interchangeable as is presumed.

Efforts to maintain continuity of units and personnel in counterinsurgency are difficult. The U.S. military has the resources and ability to frequently rotate units. The

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[81] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3–24.2: Tactics in Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army: 2009), 4–3.

negative effects of combat on units and individuals prompt leaders to keep rotations as short as possible while still being effective.

While the challenges inherent in the idea of unit interchangeability did not prevent success in the Doura area, Edward Luttwak's attention to specialized knowledge and methods deserves a closer look. As he acknowledges, interchangeable, templated, professional tools and structures of war are essential to waging conventional campaigns on a large scale, but those same tools are not immediately applicable in a counterinsurgency environment. In that kind of environment, time, local knowledge, and experience are needed. Waging counterinsurgency requires that organizations, methods, tactics, techniques, procedures, and even weapons have to be adapted. What works in one location is not necessarily interchangeable with what has been developed in another area. Valuable time and progress can be lost when this is ignored. While the principle of continuity has had prominent proponents like Pershing, Volckmann, and Vann, the best examples of how continuity can be balanced with the principle of interchangeability can be found abroad.

V.   THE BRITISH EXAMPLE

A.   CONTINUITY IN BRITISH DOCTRINE

Perhaps thanks to lessons learned during its imperial past, current British counterinsurgency doctrine features the concept of continuity in a fairly prominent position in *The Army Field Manual Vol. 1 Part 10: Countering Insurgency*. In the first section of the first chapter, continuity is detailed as a fundamental element. Continuity in planning, command, personnel, and the assigning of a specific area for the duration of a unit's tour are viewed as essential to maintaining a consistent strategy, developing trust and building relationships with the local populace and government, and developing intelligence over time.[82] All are considered key to establishing security, without which government reforms, civil development, and redress of underlying grievances cannot be accomplished.

British guidelines for implementing these measures recommend "purpose-designed, standing" headquarters, manned on the basis of individual rotations with tours of duty to be as long as possible and practicable. Tours of duty are also to be staggered to prevent mass hemorrhaging of institutional memory.[83] In other words, the British have devised an individual replacement system that does not require individuals to have to spend 10 years engaged in conflict, but also does not continually reinvent the wheel. For example, say a commander comes into a conflict zone for a three-year tour at an operational headquarters. Prior to taking command he has undergone language, counterinsurgency, and area-specific training to prepare him for this assignment. Once he is on the ground, his deputy and chief of staff have already done one or two years in their job in *that* specific area. Consequently, experience and local knowledge can be maintained, as can institutional memory, so long as the rotation system is properly managed.

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[82] United Kingdom Ministry of Defence. *Army Code 71876 British Army Field Manual Vol. 1 Part 10: Countering Insurgency* (London: Ministry of Defence, 2009), 8, 64, 127.

[83] *British Army Field Manual*, 8.

Interestingly, the British manual highlights another benefit of continuity. In addition to demonstrating to the host nation government that commitment is real, continuity reinforces the principle that "the long term solution to an insurgency rests with the host nation, its government and its people."[84] On its face, this might seem counterintuitive, since it would be natural to assume that keeping units and individuals in place for long periods could leave local nationals with the impression that they are incapable of solving their problems on their own and must have their hands held for the foreseeable future. However, consider the psychological effect of consistently rotating forces for short durations. Say you are a local national in a country with serious security problems. Annually or semi-annually comes another foreign commander, unit, or soldier to outline the way things are going to be from now on. The pitch you are given may or not be the same pitch given by the last foreigner or set of foreigners with consistent goals, but this new individual or group certainly will not know about the previous promises made or conversations conducted, let alone be a party to the trust established.

Under the British model in the same situation, in contrast, everyone is not new at the same time. There will be members of the command team who have been on the ground for one or two years and have been privy to most of the conversations and promises made and can share their knowledge. For the local nationals, this continuity helps preserve a common vision regarding goals and the paths to reach them.

British doctrine also stresses the importance of continuity in messaging across forces, continuity among approaches over time, continuity of relationships, and continuity of the forces to be employed in influence operations. All of this grows out of the prior experiences of the British.

B.   MALAYA

In 1948, the British colony of Malaya had a rising communist insurgency centered among the significant minority ethnic Chinese population (38 percent). A state of emergency was declared soon after the killing of three British planters in a communist-

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[84] *British Army Field Manual*, 8.

backed attack in June 1948, and on the heels of rising communist-initiated violence.[85] The British were faced with general antipathy in a population demoralized over the previous six years, given the British retreat from Malaya and capitulation of Singapore to the Japanese, a harsh Japanese occupation, the British resumption of control after the Japanese abandoned Malaya, ineffective and counterproductive post-war policies, and corrupt administration officials. Economic practices that favored the British government and businesses, low wages, the high cost of living (especially of rice), a rise in crime, and policies that advantaged ethnic Malays with the establishment of the new Federation of Malaya government all engendered disaffection among ethnic Chinese, other minorities, and the population at large.[86] The Malaysian Communist Party proved an attractive alternative. It served as an advocate for the alienated Chinese Malayan population. It also had cachet thanks to association with the Chinese Communist Party and to the communist Malaysian People's Anti-Japanese Army's role as the sole resistance organization throughout the Japanese occupation. Additionally, it had significant presence in Malaya's trade unions.[87]

Despite British jungle experience in the Pacific and China-Burma-India theaters in World War II, the strategy of Major General Charles Bouchet, the British commander in Malaya, relied on large sweeps by the military with a conventional World War II mindset that were drawn from his experiences in North Africa and Europe. The police force, populated by ethnically Malay officers and British officials with little local experience, proved to be inept and the government had minimal presence in ethnically Chinese areas. With political turmoil in the administration, the military and police struggled for control of the state response to the communist insurgency. These factors all resulted in an ineffective fight through the end of the 1940s against communist insurgents that only further alienated members of the Chinese Malayan community.[88]

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[85] Richard Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency 1948–1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 12, 67.

[86] Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 10–38.

[87] Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 42–62.

[88] Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 62–93.

By 1950, an in-depth review indicated that the British strategy was not working. Over the next 10 years, British and Malayan forces, both civil and military, developed, implemented, and continually adapted and improved a strategy that separated the insurgents from the population and enabled government victory. With the booming rubber and tin markets brought on by the Korean War, the government could afford a program of Chinese Malay resettlement and civil reforms. Food denial operations and eventual independence cut the insurgency off from its support base for resources and recruits. Continual improvements in police and military command and control, professionalization, tactics, and effective unit employment enabled security forces to drive insurgents out of their safe havens and whittle the insurgency down to a level incapable of threatening government power.[89] The government's strategy evolved and required numerous policy adjustments and changes to operational methods as deficiencies were identified. The Brit's commitment to establishing continuity assisted in this process and contributed to the development of a successful strategy.

Chief among the factors related to continuity was the British policy of two-year tours for commanders and staffs at the headquarters level. This enabled commanders to revise, then implement the strategy first developed by Director of Operations Lieutenant General Harold Briggs in 1950. It also enabled them to evaluate their effectiveness over a sufficient period of time and recommend refinements to their successors. When General Sir Gerald Templer was appointed High Commissioner in Malaya in 1952, he was granted unified command over both military and civil forces. Briggs recommended this, since without it the Briggs plan would not have been able to make any progress. Templer's additions to and enhancements of Briggs's strategy, such as establishment of executive committees to meet frequently at all levels to manage the war in an integrated manner, contributed to progress and were continued and further refined by his successor,

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[89] Richard Stubbs, "From Search and Destroy to Hearts and Minds: The Evolution of British Strategy in Malaya 1948–1960," in *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, ed. Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (Oxford: Osprey, 2008), 119–127.

Sir Donald MacGillivray, who had already served two years as Deputy High Commissioner.[90]

While the conditions of employment for staff and civil service personnel initially discouraged people from staying in Malaya, the continuous development of the strategy and its eventual success would have been impossible without ideas and efforts spawned by individuals with years of experience in Malaya who continued to serve throughout the Emergency. For instance, Richard Noone worked in Malaya before, during, and after World War II as an anthropologist and an intelligence officer, and eventually became the head of the Department of Aborigines. He was instrumental in denying the insurgency the support of the mountain tribes and forming an anti-guerrilla force that still exists in Malaysia as an elite police special operations unit.[91] Sir John Davis, a Special Branch police officer in Malaya in the 1930s, was similarly important. A veteran member of the Special Operations Executive in Malaya during World War II, Davis later commanded the first counter-insurgent force in the Emergency which in turn developed tactics used to train all British military forces in Malaya. During the height of the Emergency, Davis served as the British liaison officer to the ethnic Chinese Malayan resettlement program and made key improvements that ensured the success of the project. He remained until 1960.[92]

Retired British Major General E.B. de Fonblonque was another individual who spent years in Malaya. He first served as the Assistant Commissioner of Civil Defence and was then appointed Inspector General of the Home Guard (trained militias charged with protecting their local areas). From 1952–1958 he made significant improvements in

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[90] Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 98, 140, 142, 191 and Stubbs, "From Search and Destroy to Hearts and Minds," 115, 118–126.

[91] Roy Davis Linville Jumper, *Death Waits in the "Dark": The Senoi Praaq, Malaysia's Killer Elite* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 40, 50, 175, and Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 179.

[92] Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 179, John Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup With a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 68, and "John Obituary," *The Telegraph*, November 17, 2006, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1534356/John-Davis.html.

the organization and administration of this key ground-level security apparatus.[93] M.C.ff. Sheppard, a British national in the Malayan civil service in the 1930s, was not only a veteran of World War II, but had been held as a prisoner of war by the Japanese. As a British Advisor in the Civil Service, he served as a cultural advisor to the counterinsurgency effort and developed a key component of the food denial program.[94] Through individuals like these, continuity was maintained not just in the security apparatus but throughout the administration.

Continuity within the military forces was also vital. In addition to the Home Guard and Malayan units that worked in their home areas and had extensive local knowledge, extended tour lengths of two to three years gave British Army units the ability to build institutional memory and develop tactics that were tailored to specific areas.[95] The British personnel system, however, dictated that only between five and 10 percent of the formation would serve in Malaya for the entire three years (40 to 80 soldiers in an 800-man battalion).[96] And though this may seem a small number, if every U.S. platoon in Iraq or Afghanistan had three to seven individuals each with between two and three years of relevant continuous experience in the local area, along with an even larger number with one to two years, the state of affairs in both countries might be significantly different.

The six Ghurka battalions of the British forces, meanwhile, were deployed to Malaya throughout the entire Emergency. The practice of establishing designated sectors for each unit whenever possible enabled all of these units to develop localized tactics and

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[93] Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 158, 235 and "Survey of Papers of Senior UK Defence Personnel, 1900–1975," Liddell Hart Center for Military Archives, King's College London, http://www.kcl.ac.uk/lhcma/locreg/FONBLANQUE.shtml.

[94] Zuraini Md. Ali, "Tan Sri Dato' Dr. Mubin Sheppard: Pioneer in the Conservation of Historical Buildings in Malaysia, 1950–1994," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 83, Part 2, No. 299 (2010): 50–2, Felicia Yap, "Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees of the Japanese in British Asia: The Similarities and Contrasts of Experience," *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 2 (2012): 328, and Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 237.

[95] John Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency: An Analysis of the Malayan Emergency, 1948–1954* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 160.

[96] Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency,* 33 and John Briton Oldfield, *The Green Howards in Malaya (1949–52): The Story of a Post-war Tour of Duty by a Battalion of the Line* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1953), Appendix D.

solutions that increased effectiveness.[97] Lessons, tactics, and local knowledge in jungle warfare were imparted to all incoming officers and NCOs during two months of training at the Far East Land Forces Training Center, and those leaders, in turn, trained their units prior to operations.[98] A pamphlet titled *The Conduct of Anti-Terrorist Operations in Malaya* was disseminated to all forces to ensure valuable lessons and tactics were transferred between units and it helped units adjust when they were moved from one area to another.[99] The designation of Special Branch as the lead for intelligence operations likewise meant continuity of analysis, which led to more focus operations over time.[100]

While each of these practices on its own did not ensure continuity, taken as a whole, it is apparent that here was a system that valued and tried to preserve institutional memory. In sum, we can say that attention to continuity in command, administrative, and security service roles throughout the British counterinsurgency effort in Malaya aided in the development, refinement, and prosecution of strategy that effectively defeated the communist insurgency.

C.   OMAN

The British experience in Oman during the 1970s was fundamentally different from that in Malaya and elsewhere. Oman had not been a British colony and large numbers of British front-line troops were not engaged in actual fighting. Rebellious mountain tribes dissatisfied with their ruler, Sultan Said, and the lack of development were a consistently resurgent problem throughout the 1950s and 1960s. With British assistance, the Sultan's Armed Forces were created and conducted repeated campaigns with British forces against rebels who threatened the central government.[101] The

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[97] Robert W. Komer, *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of a Successful Counterinsurgency Effort* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corp., 1972), 47, United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, *Army Code 71876 British Army Field Manual Vol. 1 Part 10: Countering Insurgency* (London: Ministry of Defence, 2009), 207, and Coates, 160.

[98] Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency*, 117, 167, Oldfield, *The Green Howards in Malaya*, 3, and Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, 42, 69, 193.

[99] Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency,* 118.

[100] Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency,* 83, 124.

[101] Ian Gardiner, *In the Service of the Sultan* (South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword, 2006), 19 and John Akehurst, *We Won a War* (Wiltshire: Michael Russell, 1982), 13, 31.

establishment of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in 1968 to Oman's southwest, however, changed the character of what had been a discontinuous small nationalist rebellion and transformed it into a threatening insurgency under the auspices of a new communist organization, the People's Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf.[102] Aided by communists from the west, resistance against the policies and corruption of the Sultan grew, especially in the province of Dhofar.[103] Given the Sultan's lack of an effective counterinsurgency strategy and unresponsiveness to the population, his son Qaboos saw an opportunity for his country and himself.[104] He solicited British help in gaining control of the country. This proved an attractive offer. After all, he was a Sandhurst graduate. Couple that with the rising threat of communism in the region and Oman's strategic access to the Persian Gulf, and in 1970 the British lent him their support. Qaboos successfully orchestrated a coup against his father and sent him into exile.[105] Appealing to both his neighbors and the British government for aid to combat the insurgency, Qaboos received military assistance from the United Kingdom, Jordan, Iran, India and Baluchistan, a province of Pakistan with ethnic ties to Oman.[106]

Along with his British advisors, Qaboos developed a strategy comprised of civil development, governmental reforms, and an amnesty program to redress grievances and separate the insurgents from the populace.[107] The plan also included an expansion and professionalization of the military with British commissioned and non-commissioned officers (NCO) either on loan from the British Army and Royal Marines or contracted from former British personnel serving in command, advisory, and training roles throughout the Sultan's Armed Forces.[108] The Commander of the Sultan's Armed Forces oversaw forces of all nationalities and services in Oman, and the Dhofar brigade

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[102] Gardiner, *In the Service of the Sultan*, 21, Tony Jeapes, *SAS Secret War: Operation Storm in the Middle East* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole, 2005), 26–7.

[103] Gardiner, *In the Service of the Sultan*, 21, 23.

[104] Gardiner, *In the Service of the Sultan*, 23 and *Field Manual Vol. 1 Part 10: Countering Insurgency*, CS3–1.

[105] Gardiner, *In the Service of the Sultan*, 25.

[106] Gardiner, *In the Service of the Sultan*, 14 and Akehurst, *We Won a War*, 16.

[107] Gardiner, *In the Service of the Sultan*, 24, 25.

[108] Gardiner, *In the Service of the Sultan*, 25.

commander was given charge of all forces in Dhofar province, ensuring a unity of effort.[109] A program for recruiting and employing *firqats*, small militias of tribal members and surrendered enemy personnel run by the British 22nd Special Air Service, provided specific ground level knowledge about their home areas. Civil Action Teams of SAS personnel and the Civil Aid Department conducted development and humanitarian operations designed to gain the population's trust and cooperation. Thanks to a combined effort of civil and military action, along with government reform, the insurgency was defeated by 1975.[110]

Continuity was critical to this success. At the headquarters level, command and staff tours of two years provided leaders time to implement Qaboos's counterinsurgency strategy, assess its effects, and recommend improvements to successors, who then had experienced subordinates available to implement any needed changes. The consistent presence of an effective, dedicated local reformer who also possessed authority and dedication to the specific problem—Sultan Qaboos—was also key (this may have been even more important in Oman than in places where the British exerted more control, as in the former colonies).[111] Also important were long-serving personnel like Martin Robb, a former contract officer with the Sultan's Armed Forces who later headed the Civil Aid Department: he represented continuity on both the military and development fronts.[112] As in Malaya, here too committee meetings incorporating all departments involved in the counterinsurgency effort were held weekly to continually assess the strategy, evaluate progress, and recommend adjustments.[113]

At the lower level, British officers and NCOs led the operational units. While the serving officers did not have extended tour lengths, the units they led moved into and out of the same areas repeatedly on nine-month rotations. Half of the British advisors,

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[109] Akehurst, *We Won a War*, 31–2.

[110] *Field Manual Vol. 1 Part 10: Countering Insurgency*, CS3–3-4, CS3–4-5 and Akehurst, *We Won a War*, 62.

[111] Gardiner, *In the Service of the Sultan*, 14, 29, Jeapes, *SAS Secret War*, 13, Akehurst, *We Won a War*, 16, and *Field Manual Vol. 1 Part 10: Countering Insurgency*, CS3–2.

[112] Akehurst, *We Won a War*, 62–3.

[113] *Field Manual Vol. 1 Part 10: Countering Insurgency*, CS3–4 and Akehurst, *We Won a War*, 33.

however, were contracted directly by the Sultan. Often, these were former British military personnel who had served in Oman and then stayed on. They remained important advisors, constituting the institutional memory for the Sultan's Armed Forces. Serving British officers were, at times, seconded by or to one of these long-serving contract personnel. This mix of seasoned contract and serving officers as commanders, deputies, and subordinates created continuity of experience within the front-line leadership that would not have been present otherwise. Other measures to help bridge the continuity gap included language and area-specific training as well as a month-long area familiarization period in Dhofar itself for British officers.[114]

As to the SAS and the *firqats*, while these militias themselves changed over time and the specific SAS squadron advisors would rotate, the small size and dedication to institutional memory of the SAS itself ensured that local knowledge was passed effectively and that the campaign plan outlined for their operations in 1970 was executed and continuously refined throughout the war.[115]

In sum, continuity facilitated the design, application, and refinement of a specific plan over five years. Continuity at subordinate levels contributed to the success of the implementation of this strategy.

D.   IRAQ

In the aftermath of the 2003 U.S.-led invasion to topple Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, British forces assumed responsibility for securing, developing, and transitioning Iraq's Shia-dominated southern provinces to Iraqi control.[116] Numerous competing political factions employed armed militias to intimidate, dissuade, and eradicate their rivals as well as attack British forces.[117] The British left only 9,000 troops after the initial invasion to stabilize an area encompassing tens of thousands of square miles with a local

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[114] Akehurst, *We Won a War*, 34–5, Gardiner, *In the Service of the Sultan*, 26, 30, 47–8, 63, and *Field Manual Vol. 1 Part 10: Countering Insurgency*, CS3–2.

[115] Jeapes, *SAS Secret War*, 32, 134, 234, 237.

[116] Michael Knights and Ed Williams, "The Calm Before the Storm: The British Experience in Southern Iraq," *The Washington Institute Policy Focus 66* (2007): 108.

[117] Knights and Williams, "The Calm Before the Storm," 17, 28.

population in the millions. Consequently, they were never able to mount a comprehensive campaign to increase security, develop local institutions, or separate the populace from the developing insurgency in order to destroy it.[118]

In part, the British were unfortunate victims of the overall U.S. strategy that de-mobilized Iraqi security services, de-Baathified the political and administrative institutions beyond their ability to function, and did not prioritize the South for development. They also suffered from a lack of commitment and financial support from the British government.[119] Nor did abandoning the British practice of longer command tours for headquarters and staff do anything to improve the situation.[120] During the six-year British effort in southern Iraq, the British-led Multi-National Division (South East) (MND-SE) had eleven commanders. The Deputy Commander of Multi-National Forces-Iraq (the Senior British Representative) rotated an equal number of times. The British Deputy Commander of Multi-National Corps-Iraq rotated 10 times. Only three flag officers out of a total 32 rotations served more than one six-month tour. None served three.[121] Standing headquarters with staggered manning were foregone in favor of deploying cohesive units, as per the American practice. Institutionalized local knowledge necessary to produce a comprehensive campaign strategy was impossible to obtain, let alone maintain. After transitioning responsibility for some areas to Iraqi control, the British focused on building security services, but the short-term focus on meeting force-size goals by specific dates produced insufficiently capable forces to secure areas as they transitioned.[122] This was akin to Frank Kitson's criticism of the focus on number of enemy killed as a metric. He attributed this unproductive tendency to frequent changes in forces when no long-term vision is developed.[123]

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[118] Warren Chin, "Where Did It All Go Wrong? Reassessing British Counterinsurgency in Iraq," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (2008): 128, 133, Daniel Marston, "Adaptation in the Field: The British Army's Difficult Campaign in Iraq" *Security Challenges* 6, No. 1 (2010): 81, and Knights and Williams, "The Calm Before the Storm," 107.

[119] Chin, "Where Did It All Go Wrong?" 124, 130, 133 and Marston, "Adaptation in the Field," 72.

[120] Marston, "Adaptation in the Field," 77.

[121] Mackie, "Army Commands 1900–2011 Vol. III: Senior Appointments," 109.

[122] Chin, "Where Did It All Go Wrong?" 126.

[123] Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations*, 131.

Even if the British had developed a long-term strategy to address the underlying problems well before they withdrew in 2009, the ability to gain local knowledge and earn the trust and confidence of the population would have been limited. Six-month long unit tours with all rotations executed at the same time militated against building relationships at the unit level.[124] In-depth, continuous intelligence development, the province of local Special Branch offices in previous wars, was also sacrificed when entire units rotated completely. Each new rotation had a "blank canvas."[125]

What is especially surprising about MND(SE) is that the British experience in Northern Ireland offered two successful mitigation techniques for frequent unit rotations that were not used to great effect in Iraq.[126] Perhaps these techniques to build in continuity were too difficult to implement in detail given the fact that the British forces were ultimately subject to American decision-making in Iraq or that the British government never seemed fully committed to the effort, which was never meant to last very long. Nonetheless, both techniques are worth examining.

E.   MITIGATING THE LACK OF CONTINUITY

While a few British units were employed in specific areas for two-year tours and headquarters and staffs served two- to three-year tours to ensure continuity in Northern Ireland (1969 to 2007), many units were on six-month rotations. To assist them, beginning in 1972, units deploying to Northern Ireland were given pre-deployment

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[124] Marston, "Adaptation in the Field," 77 and Knights and Williams, "The Calm Before the Storm," 35–6.

[125] Marston, "Adaptation in the Field," 78.

[126] While the current Operational Training and Advisory Group is responsible for all pre-deployment training for British land forces and, in fact, grew out of the Northern Ireland Training and Advisory Team, the broader scope, curtailment in the length of training, and greater responsibility of the organization seem to have made the training more generalized to the theater of deployment with regard to knowledge of terrain, persons of interest, etc., rather than specific to unit areas. Accounts of the training regarding operational situations and enemy tactics, however, are generally positive. See P. Norrington Davies, *The Need For Military Training on Defence Training Estate South West* (United Kingdom: Defence Estates, 2007) https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/43319/ea_need_for_military training_august_2007.pdf, United Kingdom Forces Media Operations, *Afghan Rehearsal Extends to the Front Line*, Helmand Blog – Afghanistan, May 25, 2010, http://helmandblog.blogspot.com/2010/05/afghan-rehearsal-extends-to-front-line.html, and "Iraq – The Dangerous Occupation," *China Daily*, July 31, 2003, http://app1.chinadaily.com.cn/star/2003/0731/cn10-1.html.

training from the Northern Ireland Training and Advisory Team. Each unit received in-depth, area-specific briefings and training on intelligence, operations, politics, enemy organizations, and persons of interest in the area where they would be operating. Units assigned to different areas received very tailored training. Those teaching them were veterans of multiple tours in Northern Ireland and had conducted recent visits to their specific areas to keep the training updated and relevant. A collective exercise incorporated recent information and served as the final capstone event for the training.[127]

A second method the British used to mitigate the churn caused by constant rotations was to designate continuity officers and NCOs. These individuals were specifically selected to serve two-year tours. Their job was to observe and participate in critical activities, such as intelligence-gathering and analysis. With the local knowledge and experience they gained, they were then supposed to help new units transition into the area once they arrived. This system of serving in a long-term post to provide continuity for those on shorter tours was institutionalized and is still present in the current British counterinsurgency manual.[128]

F.   LESSONS OF THE BRITISH EXPERIENCE

As this sampling of British counterinsurgency experiences suggests, maintaining continuity has been a contributing factor to success, while its absence appears to be detrimental to long-term goals. Continuity in leadership enabled the continuous development of strategy over time, which helped the British and those they were supporting capitalize on progress and address failure. Having continuity in staff and supporting agencies helped to execute those strategies and facilitate development of key ideas over time. Experience enabled people to further improve the strategy. At the unit

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[127] Richard Iron, "Britain's Longest War," in *Modern Counter-Insurgency*, ed. Ian Beckett (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 180, United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, *Joint Doctrine Publication 3–00: Campaign Execution* (Wiltshire: The Development, Concepts, and Doctrine Center, 2010), 2–6, and Tim Ripley, *Security Forces of Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Osprey, 1993), 26.

[128] United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, *Joint Doctrine Publication 04: Understanding* (Wiltshire: The Development, Concepts, and Doctrine Center, 2010), 2–12, United States Department of Defense, Office of Transformation and United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, *Network Centric Operations Case Study: The British Approach to Low-Intensity Operations Part I* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2007), 39, and *Field Manual Vol. 1 Part 10: Countering Insurgency*, Glossary.

level, meanwhile, continuity permitted local tactics and solutions to be addressed to the different requirements of different areas.

The British experience not only demonstrates a number of ways to work toward continuity and local knowledge, but also emphasizes the importance of practicing what you preach.[129] Interestingly, Britain's most significant former colony borrowed more of its counterinsurgency approach from the French experience. India thus offers a different, but equally useful, approach to achieving continuity.

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[129] Another British example that illustrated the effects of lack of attention to continuity was the counterinsurgency campaign in the colony of Aden from 1963-1967. British units rotated every six months, received no area-specific training or lessons learned, and an assassination and intimidation campaign that targeted the local Special Branch decimated any long-term effort to gain intelligence or continuity of analysis. See the British *Field Manual Vol. 1 Part 10: Countering Insurgency* "Case Study 4" and Jonathan Walker, "Red Wolves and British Lions: The Conflict in Aden," in *Modern Counter-Insurgency*, ed. Ian Beckett, 149-166 (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007).

VI. INDIA'S RASHTRIYA RIFLES

The Indian Army's Rashtriya Rifles are designed and trained specifically to conduct counterinsurgency in the northern Indian province of Jammu and Kashmir.[130] The organization and manning of the unit emphasizes maintaining local knowledge and continuity. On its face, the example of a domestic counterinsurgency may not appear to be particularly relevant to improving U.S. counterinsurgency efforts in foreign countries, but there are a number of circumstances that make this a worthwhile case. First, while the Rashtriya Rifles conduct counterinsurgency internal to India, in most parts of Kashmir they operate in areas that are declared "disturbed." Under India's 1990 Armed Forces Act, this effectively means the area has been designated a combat zone and functions are carried out under military rather than police authorities, as if units were deployed to a foreign country. Second, the Rashtriya Rifles have developed a novel form of the individual replacement system to man these permanently forward-deployed units.[131] Finally, despite stumbling blocks, the Indian Army has been committed to developing a dedicated counterinsurgency force that values continuity and consistently improved and refined the concept over two decades. Consequently, the Rashtriya Rifles' experiences highlight both the benefits that can be gained and pitfalls that should be avoided when trying to maintain continuity in a counterinsurgency.

A. THE PROBLEM

The insurgency in Kashmir was gaining steam in 1989, marking the latest chapter in a long-standing historical dispute over an area divided among India, Pakistan, and China.[132] Pakistan's claim to Indian Kashmir is rooted in the presence of a majority Muslim population; India fights to maintain its existing sovereignty over the province as

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[130] Jammu and Kashmir is the name of a single province, hereafter referred to as Kashmir.

[131] Debalina Chatterjee, "Rashtriya Rifles in Kashmir: India's Counter-Terrorist Force," *Air Power Journal* (India) 7, no. 1 (2012): 107 and Harjeet Singh, *Doda: An Insurgency in the Wilderness* (New Delhi: Lancer, 1999), 188 and Rajesh Rajagopalan, "Innovations in Counterinsurgency: The Indian Army's Rashtriya Rifles," *Contemporary South Asia* 13, no. 1 (2004): 33.

[132] Rajagopalan, "Innovations in Counterinsurgency," 27 and "Transnational Issues: Pakistan," *CIA World Fact Book*, updated 2013, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/countrytemplate_pk.html.

well as to protect the large minority Hindu population.[133] Both, meanwhile, claim rights to China's portion. Insurgent groups in Indian Kashmir engage in armed resistance against the Indian government for varying reasons. Some want independence; others seek Pakistani rule.[134] When the insurgency resurged in the late 1980s, police and border security forces under the Ministry of Home Affairs, traditionally tasked with counterinsurgency in India, proved incapable of suppressing the insurgency.[135] At the time, the Indian Army was heavily engaged in counterinsurgency operations in Sri Lanka and other conflicts within India. In the Indian Army's view, committing further forces to counterinsurgency operations in Kashmir would degrade the country's ability to defend itself against external threats.[136] This problematic situation presented an opportunity for a new initiative.

B.   A TENTATIVE SOLUTION

General Bipin Chandra Joshi, then Chief of the Indian Army, supported an idea that arose from Army staff planners: the establishment of a separate counterinsurgency force outside the regular Army.[137] The proposed organization would be temporary and could be raised outside of Army manning caps and the regular budget, preventing strain on the existing forces allocated to national defense.[138] In Sri Lanka, the Indian Army had suffered continuity problems caused by unit rotation. To avoid this, the proposed new force would be trained in counterinsurgency methods and permanently assigned a specific operational area.[139] Active army personnel from existing units would be put on

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[133] Calculated from "District Profiles: Jammu and Kashmir," *2001 Census of India*, http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/Basic_Data_Sheet.aspx.

[134] "Who are the Kashmir Militants?" *BBC News Asia*, August 1, 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-18738906.

[135] Chatterjee, "Rashtriya Rifles in Kashmir," 97, 195, Rajagopalan, "Innovations in Counterinsurgency," 27, and Singh, *Doda*, 186–7.

[136] B. Bhattacharya, "The Rashtriya Rifles," *Bharat Rakshak Monitor* 3, no. 2 (2009), 1, http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/MONITOR/ISSUE3-2/batt.html, Chatterjee, "Rashtriya Rifles in Kashmir," 97, Rajagopalan, "Innovations in Counterinsurgency," 25–7, and Harjeet Singh, *Doda: An Insurgency in the Wilderness* (New Delhi: Lancer, 1999), 186–7.

[137] Rajagopalan, "Innovations in Counterinsurgency," 27 and Singh, *Doda*, 291–2.

[138] Rajagopalan, "Innovations in Counterinsurgency," 33 and Singh, *Doda*, 189.

[139] Singh, *Doda*, 197.

deputation to the Rashtriya Rifles; the donating unit would gain new personnel in their place. This was one way to get trained personnel into the Rashtriya Rifles expeditiously and avoid the expensive and time-consuming process of building the force from raw recruits.[140] The program would start small, with two brigade-sized Sector Headquarters, each commanding three battalions. In October 1990, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi signed the authorization to stand up the organization with a limited initial budget. The new Rashtriya (National) Rifles would be "All-India, All-Class."[141]

One advantage to drawing personnel from the Army writ large rather than from specific regions or ethnicities is that this ensured the force had no latent sympathy for the insurgents. But it also meant the organization lacked local knowledge.[142] To help ensure that institutional memory could develop, the Army assigned individuals to the Rashtriya Rifles on staggered two-year tours.[143] An eight-week counterinsurgency school and one month in-unit training were the primary tools used to reshape new members, refocus them on counterinsurgency, and impart local knowledge.[144] An overarching strategy guided the Rashtriya Rifles to operate persistently in assigned areas, objectively without being compromised by local loyalties, and cooperatively with other Army and Ministry of Home Affairs units in adjoining territories.

The organization was kept flat and responsive to enable each unit to adapt to local conditions. To maximize numbers of ground personnel capable of interacting with the populace and developing local knowledge, two heavy companies (normal in regular infantry battalions) were both replaced with light companies.[145] This also enabled a small logistics footprint that would tie into existing local structures. Administrative tasks, such as pay issues, promotions, and leave, were left to the regiments of the regular Army that assigned personnel to the Rashtriya Rifles. This freed the Rashtriya Rifles organic

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[140] Rajagopalan, "Innovations in Counterinsurgency," 29, 32, 33 and Singh, *Doda*,189, 295.

[141] Rajagopalan, "Innovations in Counterinsurgency," 28-9 and Singh, *Doda*, 186, 292–3.

[142] B. Bhattacharya, "The Rashtriya Rifles," 3.

[143] Rajagopalan, "Innovations in Counterinsurgency," 31 and B. Bhattacharya, "The Rashtriya Rifles," 2.

[144] B. Bhattacharya, "The Rashtriya Rifles," 2.

[145] Singh, *Doda*, 294-5 and B. Bhattacharya, "The Rashtriya Rifles," 2.

support structure to focus on intelligence and communications.[146] By design, the basic unit structure was adapted to maximize the units' ability to gain and exploit local knowledge and intelligence and to establish the continuity necessary to wage a counterinsurgency.

C.   PROBLEMS ARISE

During the first few years of the units' employment—in effect the pilot phase of the program—a number of difficulties arose. While minimizing the administrative structure allowed a greater focus to be placed on intelligence and operations, the design of the individual replacement system contained a flaw that led to decreased morale and unwillingness among soldiers to join the Rashtriya Rifles. Since soldiers were drawn from all over the Army, the few administrative personnel within the Rashtriya Rifles battalions found themselves having to deal with as many as 28 parent regiments. They were overwhelmed by the workload and systemic delays in promotions, pay, and leave impacted morale and degraded unit effectiveness.[147]

This same system had another unintended effect. When every infantry regimental commander in the Indian Army was tasked with providing 10–20 percent of his men to the Rashtriya Rifles, commanders often viewed this as an opportunity to transfer underperformers and individuals with disciplinary problems. This practice hindered the ability of the Rashtriya Rifles to successfully indoctrinate everyone, damaged unit cohesion, and prevented the development of a high quality organization.[148]

Although maintaining continuity was a founding principle of the Rashtriya Rifles, drawing personnel from many different units combined with individual rotations resulted in an actual *loss* of continuity.[149] Soldiers would come in, receive training and experience, and then go back to one of the many parent regiments. The system was unable to ensure that personnel would then return to the same Rashtriya Rifles battalion if

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[146] Rajagopalan, "Innovations in Counterinsurgency," 29-30 and Singh, *Doda*, 189–2, 296.

[147] Rajagopalan, "Innovations in Counterinsurgency," 29-30 and Singh, *Doda*, 190–1, 296.

[148] Rajagopalan, "Innovations in Counterinsurgency," 31 and B. Bhattacharya, "The Rashtriya Rifles," 3.

[149] Rajagopalan, "Innovations in Counterinsurgency," 30-1 and Singh, *Doda*, 191, 195–6.

they were re-assigned to the Rashtriya Rifles. This resulted in a loss of institutional knowledge and experience and worked against the maintenance of local knowledge that had been the intent behind the establishment of the Rashtriya Rifles.

In a complex operational environment, actions in one area can have an effect on the situation in adjoining areas. Insurgents, support mechanisms, and intelligence often cross boundaries that different counterinsurgency organizations build between themselves. Often, cooperative measures are necessary to overcome these divides that insurgents otherwise take advantage of. Unfortunately, institutional rivalries between the Indian Army and Ministry of Home Affairs sometimes prevented such cooperation.[150] Maintaining the intended continuity within the Rashtriya Rifles could have helped build relationships to overcome these obstacles over time.

D.   RESTRUCTURING 1994–1996

In 1994, the organization's performance and resources were reviewed with an eye toward determining the future of the Rashtriya Rifles experiment.[151] The success of the unit and continued commitments by the regular Army contributed to the decision to extend and expand the temporary Rashtriya Rifles program.[152] This review was also used as an opportunity to correct some of the deficiencies identified during the first few years.[153]

Accordingly, to eliminate the backlog of administrative issues, a relationship was established between each Rashtriya Rifles battalion and a single parent regiment.[154] Through this relationship, a single regular Army regiment would provide soldiers and administrative support to a specific Rashtriya Rifles battalion. This arrangement between specific units also allowed standardization of the requirements for assigning personnel to the Rashtriya Rifles. New physical, cognitive, and experiential standards required each

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[150] Rajagopalan, "Innovations in Counterinsurgency," 33–4 and Singh, *Doda*, 192.

[151] B. Bhattacharya, "The Rashtriya Rifles," 2.

[152] Singh, *Doda*, 291 and B. Bhattacharya, "The Rashtriya Rifles," 2.

[153] Singh, *Doda*, 190–1, 293.

[154] Chatterjee, "Rashtriya Rifles in Kashmir," 98, Rajagopalan, "Innovations in Counterinsurgency," 31, and Singh, 191.

commander to assign higher quality soldiers to the Rashtriya Rifles.[155] The return of these soldiers to their parent regiment after their tour with the Rashtriya Rifles made it in a unit commander's interest to abide by these standards. The length of individual tours in the Rashtriya Rifles was extended from two years to three or four. Counterinsurgency and unit training were doubled to six months.[156] Leave and pay incentives were introduced to encourage qualified individuals to volunteer, compensate them for longer tours, and encourage repeat assignment.[157] These measures notably improved unit cohesion and effectiveness, but also contributed to the maintenance of valuable local knowledge and experience within Rashtriya Rifles units.

E.   THE RASHTRIYA RIFLES TODAY

The Rashtriya Rifles design has been lauded as an organizational innovation in counterinsurgency.[158] Its increase in force structure from six to 66 battalions (with the addition of four division-level Force Headquarters) as well as an overall 1400 percent budgetary increase suggests that successive Indian administrations credit the Rashtriya Rifles for some of the success quelling the insurgency in Kashmir.[159] The regular Army has likewise seen a reduction in its counterinsurgency role in Kashmir.[160] To be sure, the Rashtriya Rifles has its detractors, and exactly how much difference the unit has made is debated.[161] Arguably, additional measures to combat insurgency in Kashmir such as pressure on Pakistani safe havens, a border fence, and increased police capabilities have

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[155] Rajagopalan, "Innovations in Counterinsurgency," 31.

[156] Singh, *Doda*, 195, 297 and Pinaki Bhattacharya and Amana Sharma, "Antony Meets Armed Forces Chiefs; Naxals to Face Army," *Mail Today*, June 2, 2010, http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/Antony+meets+armed+forces+chiefs;+Naxals+to+face+Army/1/99840.html.

[157] "Gaps in the Ranks," *Far Eastern Economic Review* 157, no. 47 (1994): 12.

[158] Rajagopalan, "Innovations in Counterinsurgency," 26.

[159] Rajagopalan, "Innovations in Counterinsurgency," 25, 34.

[160] Singh, *Doda*, 198.

[161] Chatterjee, "Rashtriya Rifles in Kashmir," 101 and Sanjay Kak, "The Apparatus: Laying Bare the State's Terrifying Impunity in Kashmir*," The Caravan*, March 1, 2013, http://www.caravanmagazine.in/reportage/apparatus?page=0,3. One negative aspect of the continuity achieved in the Rashtriya Rifles allows local communities to become familiar with individual officers and to charge them by name, sometimes spuriously, with war crimes.

also contributed.[162] Nonetheless, a survey of recent English-language Indian news articles, however, shows positive coverage of the Rashtriya Rifles and gives them credit for India's success.

Repeated calls since 2000 to redeploy elements of the Rashtriya Rifles to other troubled areas in India are further evidence of the effectiveness of the Rashtriya Rifles.[163] Of course, such a move would seem to undermine the purpose of creating a Kashmir-oriented counterinsurgency force. The risks of such a move were illustrated in 1999, when Rashtriya Rifles units were redeployed from stable areas in Kashmir to the Pakistani border in order to support the Army in a border dispute. Once these units left their assigned areas, violence increased.[164] This anecdote illustrates the significance of maintaining continuity for stability, but also highlights the danger of relying on it as a crutch at the expense of lasting peace.

F.   LESSONS OF THE KASHMIR EXPERIENCE

The success of the Rashtriya Rifles has removed some of the stigma associated with the conduct of counterinsurgency operations in the Indian Military. Worth noting is that the current Chief of Staff of the Indian Army was a Force Headquarters commander in the Rashtriya Rifles.[165] The presence of persistently engaged forces, along with continuity of personnel and policy, has contributed to the counterinsurgency success in Kashmir. The lessons that the Rashtriya Rifles have learned over the past 20 years offer compelling evidence for the importance of institutional knowledge and local experience. By establishing permanently stationed headquarters and locally assigned units and

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[162] Martin Sieff, "India Fights Terror with Four-Step Counterinsurgency Strategy," *Asia Pacific Defense Forum*, April 5, 2012, http://apdforum.com/en_GB/article/rmiap/articles/online/features/2012/04/05/india-terror-strategy.

[163] Chatterjee, "Rashtriya Rifles in Kashmir," 114, "Indian Army Will Get Boost for COIN Operations," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, May, 4, 2001, https://janes.ihs.com.libproxy.nps.edu/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=News&ItemId=++ +1160175&Pubabbrev=JDW, and "Rashtriya Rifles against Naxals: Army Wary," *Stratpost: South Asian Defense and Strategic Affairs*, August 17, 2009, http://www.stratpost.com/rashtriya-rifles-against-naxals-army-wary.

[164] B. Bhattacharya, "The Rashtriya Rifles," 7-8.

[165] "Chief of the Army Staff General Vijay Kumar Singh," *Official Website of the Indian Army*, http://indianarmy.nic.in/Site/FormTemplete/frmTemp1PTC2C.aspx?MnId=e2/rQxdLFL/n019vs4Q4Cg== &ParentID=0nNzddH5HqmTTkqk1wO6wg==&flag=+RGr1YnZSmfUFJB9Hq6ASQ==.

supporting them through a specifically designed administrative and training system, the Rashtriya Rifles have maximized continuity and produced a force with the ability to devise local solutions to erode the power of the insurgency and increase stability.

VII. IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS

The absence of continuity in U.S. counterinsurgency operations can be seen as a result of two things. First, U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine does little to address the importance of continuity in long-term campaigns. Second, since continuity is seemingly not important, the systems that provide forces to support U.S. counterinsurgency campaigns do not account for continuity when manning and allocating forces for deployment. The results of this inattention to continuity cause campaigns to become more protracted, less effective, and costlier than necessary. Instituting a few measures, inspired by both classic counterinsurgency theory as well as British and Indian methods, can help mitigate these effects. Permanently-stationed headquarters designed specifically for counterinsurgency campaigns, minimum two-year command and staff tours with staggered manning at non-tactical headquarters, modification of the unit rotation and assignment policies to pair specific units with specific regions during a campaign, establishment of area-specific continuity cells on extended tours, and requirements that area-specific training packages be tailored for each deploying unit are all fairly simple concepts that can be implemented to redress some of these problems. Management and resourcing of the systems needed to execute these measures, however, is much more complicated. Thus, integrating continuity into U.S. doctrine is necessary to ensure that these methods are implemented to, in turn, ensure more effective counterinsurgency campaigns.

The U.S. *does* generally understand and implement the concept of permanently stationed, purpose-built headquarters. The Defense Department divides the world into regions and gives responsibility for each region to a specific Geographic Combatant Command to accomplish U.S. strategic objectives. These are commanded and staffed using an individual replacement system of three-year tours. This tour length is sacrosanct and takes a Defense-Department-level waiver to shorten. The stationing of these headquarters, either within U.S. territory or on the soil of a long-term ally (Germany), however, means that, when contingencies arise, the conceptual leap is not made from a

standing long-term engagement headquarters to approaching the establishment of a headquarters for waging a particular counterinsurgency the same way. In Iraq and Afghanistan, permanent headquarters were eventually established with Multi-National Forces-Iraq (later U.S. Forces-Iraq), the International Security Assistance Force, and U.S Forces-Afghanistan. The manning for these headquarters, however, utilized one-year tours for staff. For commanders, the U.S. has made some attempt to capitalize on local knowledge and theater commanders have usually had prior command experience within that theater. Command tours, however, are managed on an individual basis and usually only last between one and (in the case of General Raymond Odierno) two years.

In both the British and Indian examples, continuity of policy and strategy in commanders and staffs was a function of standing headquarters, extended tours, and staggered rotations. During a two- to three-year tour, a commander had time to implement and, more importantly, assess a strategy and had a staff with one to two years of continuous experience in that theater. Establishing relationships with local officials, understanding which programs are working and which are not, and ensuring that the local priorities of tactical commanders support the overall strategy are achievable goals when people are afforded the time to develop local knowledge and experience. As Robert Thompson pointed out, one year is insufficient. Certainly, for commanders and staffs at U.S. theater and operational level headquarters, implementation of staggered extended tours of two years would help achieve Russell Volckmann's principle of continuity of policy. The benefits to the overall development and execution of strategy over time are clear. Without a strategy that could be iteratively and continuously developed and improved, the victories in Malaya and Oman or progress in Kashmir would not have been possible.

There *is* a disadvantage to continuity at this higher level. The risk of being saddled with a bad commander or strategy is very real in the minds of U.S. strategists and must be addressed. Case in point: General William Westmoreland commanded forces in Vietnam for four years.[166] For reasons still subject to debate, in the end, his strategy did

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[166] "William Westmoreland," *Udini by Proquest eLibrary Essential Topics*, http://udini.proquest.com/topic/william-westmoreland/.

not work; the painful legacy of that failure echoes throughout the U.S. military to this day. To help prevent such an outcome, impartial review, conducted both internally and externally, must be periodically undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy. More importantly, the recommendations of the reviewers must be *heeded*. Without such reviews in Malaya in 1950, the change in strategy would not have been possible. Attention to continuity should not, however, mask inadequacy or failure. The change in strategy in Malaya would likewise not have been possible without a changing of the guard in key posts in 1950–51.[167]

For the U.S. in Iraq and Afghanistan, subordinate operational commands (such as the Multi-National Corps and Divisions in Iraq or the International Joint Command and Regional Commands in Afghanistan) with responsibility for tactical units are standing headquarters in name only. They have, at their core, rotating units of corps or division headquarters. This generates the same problems as unit rotation at the tactical level. While standing up permanent headquarters with individual replacements, akin to the Force Headquarters of the Rashtriya Rifles, would establish continuity and foster better institutional memory, the size of such an undertaking makes such a solution impractical. Instead, the permanent assignment to one of these regional operational commands of a single unit headquarters with responsibility for manning and rotating personnel from its home station would be sufficient to help headquarters maintain an institutional memory and local knowledge continuously over time. Managing these tours on a staggered basis with length of duty as extended as possible would help build continuity. A commander of this division or corps would ideally spend his entire command tour in charge of a region of the theater, with a rotating staff underneath him from a pre-identified pool of individuals from his home station. A concomitant increase in the allocation of personnel to the unit would be necessary to sustain this, but each headquarters could tailor its needs in both personnel and rotations based on local conditions.

Universal individual rotation in lower-level units on permanent forward deployment, as practiced by the Rashtriya Rifles, or even the extended three-year tours of

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[167] Stubbs, "From Search and Destroy to Hearts and Minds," 129–30.

the British in bygone days, are not feasible for the U.S. military. Unit cohesion and effectiveness *are* enhanced with units rotating rather than individuals. Additionally, the disarray caused by individual rotation and short command tours in Vietnam are still fresh in the military's institutional memory. Thus, culturally-speaking, individual rotation is not achievable. A variation on the Rashtriya Rifles model, however, does make sense. Tactical-level units, subordinate to the geographically oriented regional commands, could operate on a rotational basis within a finite group—for example, with a three to one ratio where one battalion is deployed, one is resetting, and one is training to deploy. These three units could repeatedly trade responsibility for the same area (as operations dictate). With tours as long as possible but as short as necessary, units in an area with a high level of violence and kinetic intensity could rotate more frequently (for example, every four months). Units in a more stable area could have longer tours. Continuity could be tailored depending on the geographic orientation of specific units, higher casualty rates, or greater stress levels on a rotational basis. To avoid the constant shifting in priorities that occurs when tactical units and the headquarters two levels above them rotate at the same time, these rotations should be offset, as should be the rotations of units in adjoining areas. Having a persistently present higher headquarters would ensure that priorities continue to meet objectives and bridge the gaps that unit rotations currently create. The emphasis that could then be placed on carrying out the *long-term* work of counterinsurgency could help advance the overall strategy in a continuous manner and would decrease the one-upsmanship in setting new priorities that the churn of rotation promotes and the visibility theory of promotion predicts. The tying of units to an area would also reinforce units' and commanders' long-term interest in the development and success of sustainable local programs, as opposed to the fire-and-forget attitude that the current rotational model encourages.

Not even this, however, is enough. While continual local knowledge is acquired over repeated tours to the same area, some disadvantages inherent to frequent rotations would remain. Continuity cells on two-year tours would help mitigate some of these remaining problems. These cells, drawing from British doctrine, would tie in to the intelligence and operations processes at each level in their assigned headquarters with a

focus on maintaining area specific information regarding the terrain, enemy, trends, operations, local government, and personalities. Experience shows that rotations result in data loss over time in part because the units themselves are responsible for maintaining this data. One way to prevent this and maximize use of available technology is to make separate continuity cells responsible for cataloguing and archiving operational and intelligence records for specific areas and to make this user-friendly. Having extended chronological records indexed by subject for specific areas spanning the entire campaign would be highly valuable to rotating units. No broad solution to this problem is currently available.[168] These records would also assist the cells with their secondary task: to help keep informed area-specific pre-deployment training teams.

As the British did in Northern Ireland, area-specific pre-deployment training packages with a high level of detail and operational relevance should be developed through the efforts of the continuity cells and pre-deployment training teams. Current U.S. models for this usually involve either externally organized general set-piece pre-deployment training or internal unit-designed training that is as specific as possible but lacks detailed information about the area imparted by prior experience and deep local knowledge.[169] Training teams dedicated to this task, akin to those the British used in Northern Ireland, would provide continuity for the periodically rotating units, especially if they paid periodic visits to the subject areas and were tied to the continuity cells.

A permanent regional headquarters combined with the continuity cells would also provide the flexibility necessary in any campaign. Inevitably, areas become stable, less

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[168] Current efforts in this vein such as the Combined Information Data Network Exchange, Distributed Common Ground System-Army, various intelligence systems, and civil-military information systems aggregate data over time but each is limited to the purpose for which it was designed and most are focused on enemy activity and networks. The intent behind these systems is to share information between units, with analysts, or with other collectors to aid in increasing the scope of analysis.

[169] There are U.S. methods that have been developed over the years in Afghanistan and Iraq that are similar to continuity NCOs/officers and the Northern Ireland Training and Advisory Team principles. Some units send specific personnel to their assigned area months in advance to learn from the transitioning unit. Also, detailed pre-deployment Mission Readiness Exercises for headquarters use real time data and information from the transitioning unit to actually plan the first operations of a unit's upcoming deployment to avoid the lag in operations that accompanies unit turnover. Both of these methods, however, primarily incorporate information from the ongoing rotation and don't have access to data lost through previous transitions. Additionally, they are currently not firmly institutionalized and could easily be abandoned in future counterinsurgency conflicts.

important, or are sacrificed for higher priorities and units must move. The regional commands and continuity cells would have the ability to offer consistency in terms of guidance as well as serve as repositories of historical information, intelligence, and knowledge for any new units assigned to the area. This is rarely accomplished under the current system in which units can abruptly be given new areas of responsibility mid-tour.

While these measures address some of the issues related to local knowledge and institutional memory, they do not help with developing relationships and building trust with local officials and the populace. To the extent feasible, key advisory relationships should be identified as early as possible as should specific individuals to work with those local nationals or organizations for extended tours. Of course, repeated episodic engagements by a small pool of individuals drawn from repetitively rotating units over a number of years will not lead to the same degree of trust that can be developed by a single individual who is there continually, but this still represents a decisive improvement on rotating successive individuals with changing priorities.

To return to Luttwak's view—that SOF are a more appropriate tool for counterinsurgency—one reason for this is that SOF are organized and have the authorities to adapt personnel and unit rotation policies as the situation requires. When and where possible, SOF establish habitual relationships between units and specific locales, emplace standing headquarters, and stagger rotations. But, by virtue of SOF's relatively small size, the sustainability and broad application of such methods to large theaters is limited. For efforts that require greater involvement by the broader military, it is imperative that the importance of continuity be internalized throughout that broader force.

These measures to establish continuity introduce additional challenges in resourcing, coordination, personnel management, and logistics flows to an already complex system. Obtaining increased resources for more frequent rotations, additional manpower for individual rotations at standing headquarters, and more robust force structure for continuity cells, training teams, and dedicated advisory personnel would present a significant fiscal challenge in the current resource-constrained environment. Implementing systems to manage this added complexity would hamper planners and, again, require more resources. Significant resistance to such measures is easy to imagine,

especially since every initiative comes down to a fight over resources among stakeholders—something as true for Frank Kitson in the 1970s as it is today. Kitson even acknowledged this situation and found that it highlighted the importance of educating people in the larger support structure about the necessity for continuity in counterinsurgency. For Kitson, understanding the importance of maintaining continuity needed to be universal across the force, among operators and administrators alike.[170]

One crucial element in the education of the force is to change entrenched attitudes. For instance, immense prestige accrues to both units and individuals who serve in combat. This leads to a 'share the wealth' attitude regarding combat assignments, encouraging the practice of ensuring as many individuals and units get to rotate through the fight as possible. There is a 'share the pain' attitude also associated with this same phenomenon. Consequently limiting the pool of rotational forces deserves further study. First, what incentive structures are needed to ensure the viability of a program that only commits part of the force to operations? Maintaining continuity is predicated on institutional memory and this requires that individuals remain in units for long periods of time. What is required to encourage this behavior? Second, the stress of repeated deployments to intense conflict zones takes a psychological toll that cannot be offset by incentive programs. The military currently struggles with how best to mitigate this, but if counterinsurgency is to be waged more effectively and expediently, enabling a smooth transition to host nation government responsibility faster, then figuring out how to maintain continuity by keeping individuals in the field for longer or more frequent periods of time needs to be made a priority.

Instituting measures such as those described above flies in the face of inertia, bureaucracy, and the current method the U.S. military uses to wage counterinsurgency. Systemic changes always come down to a single question in the military. Are they worth the resources they cost to implement? In the case of continuity, the historic correlates are clear, while the recent U.S. practice of ignoring it point to continuity being worth the commitment of resources and personnel up front to reap the benefits in lives, stability,

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[170] Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations*, 175.

and development later. The significant challenge to altering the course of future U.S. counterinsurgency efforts will be to propagate these lessons so that decision makers and resource providers alike understand the value that maintaining continuity brings to long-term campaigns like counterinsurgency.

The current sentiment throughout the United States government, and American society, is that long, static wars such as those following 9/11 are wars of choice and these experiences have taught the U.S. not to choose such wars in the future. Consequently, drastic reforms in the way the U.S. conducts counterinsurgency may not be popular or institutionally desirable. But, as a popular military aphorism puts it, the choice is not always up to one side and 'the enemy has a vote.' Despite the general belief that such wars will not be necessary in the future and are to be avoided, it is essential that there be thoughtful reflection about these recent conflicts. This must include examination of a new paradigm for waging long-term campaigns—common in counterinsurgency—so as not to repeat and compound the mistakes of the recent past that resulted from inattention to continuity. The cost in blood and treasure of prolonged campaigns is too great when they are unnecessarily ineffectual for too long.

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